

XV



a dead spot of light...

Introduction

Not all planned stuff made it in this edition. Partly due to my own laziness, good weather – after an awful summer – and issues on the band sites; for reasons I can only fathom. Well, judging from the stuff that waits for to be covered still, the next edition seems to be quite full already; excluding interviews of course. And I say this as someone who does not receive many promotional copies; some bands/labels even do not send the stuff they promised once ... not that I insist, but it makes you think.

This edition has the 'Nest' interview, which was supposed to open the previous edition, but the band could not make the deadline, so I had to wait some additional weeks. The Ebonillumini has some strange colours in the questions, which were done by the band and who am I to change something like this?

Please support Stan of Reality Impaired Records; see the previous edition. He has moved and set up his mailorder again, yet the amount that is offered is still limited.

Contact:

realityimpairedrec (at) yahoo.com

For more information on this situation, check page ... with a message from him.

Not much to say ... aside from this.

I hope you enjoy this magazine ...

And as I do not want to write this every time in every freaking interview:

I would like to thank every band and label for the promotion material, answer and so on. And thank you for the moral support and nice e-mails ... appreciated!

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All the best ...
oneyoudontknow

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A long opening interview

Nest

Hello ... I hope you are fine and thanks for the opportunity to do this interview with you. You do not mind some more questions, don't you? Furthermore, who am I actually addressing?

A.T.: Greetings. This is A.T. And no, I don't mind questions at all. Fire away.

Why did you pick the name 'Nest' for your band? When you think about it, then a nest is nothing more than a place for a chick, the one place in which it takes a first glimpse on the world, while adult animals will leave it in order to explore nature or their surrounding environment for themselves. Therefore, a certain limitation seems be inherent in this term. Your response?

A.T.: Sure, Nest can indeed be a place you begin your journey, but a place you eventually leave. On the other hand, Nest is the first place of shelter, something one may have good memories of, and find comfortable to visit time after time. What Nest means to me most is comfort, solace, a place where you have support to experiment. Everything has limitations, but one doesn't necessarily need to accept the constraints. Nest is, after all, just a name, no matter how symbolic. The same is true with all the names of my projects.

As the band was founded in 1999, what motivated you to start it? Did you play in other bands before or had this been your first experience? Were you influenced by certain albums and did these create a certain idea in your mind that you tried to express?

A.T.: I had been making music since the early nineties, mostly metal within the computer tracker scene. Nest came about from my yearning to start playing a more peculiar instrument, and experimenting if I could make music different from what I had been doing prior. I deliberately wanted to try acoustic and ambient, but also shorter songs with simpler structures. This was actually experimental for me, and carried through the first demo, split and full length album. It wasn't long before I drifted back into doing longer and more elaborate stuff on Trail of the Unwary, though.

Did your hometown and its environment have an impact on you? In a few words, what does Riihimäki look like?

A.T.: I believe it has quite a strong impact on me. I really enjoy the feel and look of this place. It's a small town of approx. 25k people. It's got great rural surroundings, which I like to wander through as often as I can. I'd hate to live in a bigger city where one was unable to find considerable areas of forests, fields, lakes and such – especially within biking distance. Riihimäki also has the advantage that it's along a major railway, so it's easy to get to the cities close by to work.

Your homepage cites that two persons are involved in the band:

A. Tolonen and T. Saxell.

Were both involved right from the start or did this 'alliance' evolve over the years? Do both have the same musical background and what effect does this have on Nest's art?

A.T.: I started Nest as my own project initially, but T.S. came aboard quite early. On Hidden Stream he was already a full member, so to speak. We're childhood friends, and he is actually the one who got me started in making music. I'm eternally grateful for this help and guidance.

What are their roles in the band and did these evolve as time passed on? Are both of them involved in the song-writing?

A.T.: I do most of the song and lyrics writing, but T.S. does contribute to the bass lines, lyrics and vocal parts. This is mostly because we live quite far away from each other, in different towns, and it's easier for me to work on the songs alone initially. This is how our roles in the band have always been, and it works well.

On your homepage you have posted the following:

As you can see, nature - our wondrous Godgiven playground, fantasy and more precisely fables are the fluid that courses through Nest's veins. Old folk and animal tales as well as the works of brothers Grimm and Tolkien, to name a few, have been the roots of great inspiration. But even though Nest serves as a vessel to express these things important to us, an equally important reason for Nest's existence is to bring enjoyment to all who should find it in atmospheres brought forth by acoustic, ambient and even somewhat folky music.

(Source: <http://koti.mbnet.fi/atolonen/nest/info.html>)

When it comes to song-writing, do you take a picture or an impression inside your head and compose the music or is it a riff or sound which works as a starting point? Has this changed over the years?

A.T.: I do both. I improvise on the kantele for my own enjoyment, and I eventually land on melodies, riffs, and whatnot that I see working in a song. I continue playing, finding accompanying stuff, and once I'm satisfied with the amount I go write down the first stages of a song. Once the song begins to take shape it gives me an idea of what its theme will most likely be, and the lyrics and title follow.

Sometimes I have a clear idea of a theme I want to explore as a song. "Hunt" on Trail of the Unwary is a prime example of a something like this. In it, I deliberately wanted to make a song going through the many aspects of the hunt, connecting both musical and lyrical cues to it. Making a song this way is definitely harder than the one I outlined earlier, because I demand it of myself that all parts fit, and that there is no filler, or even a single transition that doesn't support the theme.

Lastly, I very seldom make lyrics before I've written the music – or at least most of it. Nevertheless, this has happened a couple of times when I've come up with a verse, sentence, whatever, and I just had to lay it down then and there. When this happens the thing I came up with will determine what the song's theme will be, and it will be the central piece in the lyrics.

Why do you take influences from Old folk and animal tales as well as the works of brothers [sic] Grimm and Tolkien and others as a source of inspiration? What do you find in these and are they some sort of escape from the science-dominated world we live in?

A.T.: I enjoy escapism, imagination, fantastic tales and all that good stuff. I can't really explain why this is. Not any more than why I can say I like nature. It's just something that captures my interest and makes me want to incorporate it into my creative endeavors. On the other hand I strive to be a die hard realist and a pragmatist, but I often yearn for a more idealized world, where one could find both simpler problems and simpler solutions.

Are they still able to create fascination as they used to when they were written? When you take the writings of Lovecraft and Poe for instance, then their works look quite peculiar in the eyes of the modern rational.

A.T.: I couldn't say much about when they were written, because I wasn't around that time when it comes to many stories I enjoy. However, I can say



that almost all the stories still evoke just as strong a feeling in me nowadays as they did when I first read them. Even when I'm completely familiar with all the plot points and whatnot, they still strike me with full force. There are some stories, like many Howard's Conan tales, certain Lovecraft, Moorcock, Pratchett, etc. that I read at least once a year, and I never seem to get tired of them.

Let us talk a bit about some general aspects: how did the recording process change of the years? Do not get me wrong, but the early output – all charming atmosphere put aside – sound a bit cheap. Especially the keyboards have a strange touch. Well, what kind of equipment have you used now and then?

A.T.: The recording process has changed quite a bit. I've always done everything myself, and still do, but my skills and the equipment has improved considerably over the years. I've studied music production, mixing, mastering, etc. on my own for a number of years, and I will probably continue indefinitely. It is understandable that some people may find that the earliest Nest material sound "cheap". It was done back when my knowledge about music production was limited to just recording instruments and setting their volumes.

I guess I can reveal a bit more of my creation process back in the early days, because it's been such a long time already. For Nest's demo and the Hidden Stream split I made everything completely with samples. There were no real synthesizers used. I couldn't have afforded them if I wanted to. I also used the Amiga back then, and while it was (and still is) a marvelous computer, it was most suited for sample based tracker music – a thing I also happen to love, but Nest isn't too similar to it. At the time of making Woodsmoke I got a PC and software providing more options for actual mixing. The PC machines were so slow at this time, though, that I couldn't use software synthesizers and still had to use samples in that aspect. On Trail of the Unwary I finally got to use softsynths (whose sounds I programmed myself), and this is the method I've used ever since. I must say, that I still use music software providing oldschool tracker feel to this day. It gives me much more power in composing than the DAW thingies more common in modern music production.

A characteristic – and maybe even outstanding – element of your music is kantele. What place does it have in the Finnish music culture and to what degree is it used today? Is it limited to 'traditional' folk music or does it appear in more modern aka mainstream-oriented music as well?

A.T.: The kantele still has a relatively small footprint in the Finnish musical culture, which is quite weird because it is our national instrument. Luckily its profile has been on the rise for a couple of decades now, and people are beginning to see it as more than just a relic of a bygone era. Nowadays it is used in just about all kinds of musical genres from jazz to metal to pop to experimental stuff. Naturally there are also plenty of bands using it in a traditional setting.

Why did you play this instrument? Did you like the sound or what created the fascination in the first place? Do you play other instruments as well? Was musical education something you have had a chance to enjoy or are you self-taught?

A.T.: I decided to start playing the kantele, because I'm fascinated by the Finnish cultural heritage, olden times, traditions, and such. The kantele is the first instrument I learned to play, and it's still my biggest love when it comes to things you make noise with. Also, when I started playing it I wanted to try playing something a bit more peculiar than your usual guitar, bass, drums and keyboards – things that just about everyone else seemed to be playing. Nothing wrong with any of those, though. I just wanted to experiment with something more out of the ordinary. Nowadays I also play bass, guitar, keyboards, Lapland drums (and similar frame drums), the didgeridoo, and whatever I find myself interested in at any given time. I'm self taught in all instruments I play. I study theory and practice, but this I do on my own.

When you started Nest, did you also have the intention also been do play something with the kantele?

A.T.: Yep. Both of them are linked. I wanted to try something that relied mostly on the kantele, and other instruments would provide the background. This didn't stay as clearly defined for long, but it was the starting idea.

Another striking aspect of Nest is the use of the vocals. A somehow constant factor is the way you avoid 'singing'; rather some form of murmuring, whispering and what not can be found on all of the releases; an exception might be 'The Turning of the Tides', with its speaking like part.

A.T.: As with many other of my musical choices, this was also brought about because of experimentation. I wanted to try all kinds of vocal styles not commonly used in at least the music I was familiar with. I really liked the idea of using whispers and something best described as "voice acting". These have often split the opinions of the listeners, but that is to be expected when using something so heavily out of the norm.

Furthermore, 'Across the Waters', the succeeding track, comes with females vocals, which is a nice additional element, simply used on too small a scale. Is there a chance to hear more of the latter?

A.T.: Absolutely. Whenever I can think of a place using female vocals I will include them. You probably also noticed that even those vocals didn't have any singing. I thought it was an interesting idea having female vocals just do spoken word. There are even more peculiar uses of female vocals already present and in the planning stages for new songs.

While the early recordings of Nest had a lot of keyboards in them, this had changed significantly over the course of the years. Already on Woodsmoke and particularly 'Trail of the Unwary' – the latest output – a more natural sound can be found. Is this dense and intense atmosphere that you have reached, the kind of music you always had in mind when you started this band? Do you want to guide the listener gently through the 'ambiences' or is there a chance to find a bit more contrasts on a future recording?

A.T.: I seldom plan anything too broad ahead, so I can't say there is any definite end point that I'm trying to achieve. Each album is a journey of its own, and I have a vision of what I want to do for every one of them. Woodsmoke (and other earlier material) was meant to consist of shorter and simpler material, Trail of the Unwary was meant to be more ambient with drifting soundscapes and elaborate song structures. The future will reveal itself to me when I start composing new stuff. I like letting my "art" choose the way it wants to go, so to speak. I eventually start refining the material once the aforementioned process has produced enough tangible material. I must also point out that the amount of synthesizers has actually increased on every album. On Trail of the Unwary there were always at least 7 synths in each song – often playing simultaneously – but most of them were there to provide layers and support for the overall soundscape. They concentrated more on boosting the atmosphere rather than working as lead instruments.



What kind of instruments do you actually use for your music and how has this changed over the years? You use also metal guitars – on a low scale – for your music, or?

A.T.: The staple instrument I use is of course the kantele, but bass, Lapland drums, and a hefty dose of synths are often present too. Synths are especially great because with some tweaking you can get an almost endless amount of sounds with them. I sometimes also use more peculiar instruments, such as the didgeridoo, wood blocks, field recordings and such. I actually don't use guitars (there has only been clean electric guitars on the song Hideout), but a distorted kantele. I deliberately don't draw attention to the fact that I use an electric kantele. I find it interesting seeing people coming to the conclusion that what they hear on Nest's songs must be a guitar, even though it is never mentioned on the album. I actually made my own baritone electric kantele just for the purpose of being able to play metal with it. This instrument will be heavily featured on forthcoming Syven material, but it hasn't appeared on any Nest material previously.

A track that seems to stand out from all would be 'Hunt' – of 'Trail of the Unwary'. When you listen to it, then the listener seems to get immersed in such a chase. The variation of the tempo, the intensity in the arrangements, the use of drums to increase the atmosphere and so on and so forth, all these facets create together a somewhat coherent picture, which seems to differ from all other compositions, because there you get the feeling that the general orientation of Nest's art actually becomes 'flesh'. Did you have had a plan to compose such a track from the point you started working on 'Trail of the Unwary' or did this idea develop over time? Is this an idea you like to explore more thoroughly a bit more at some point in the future?

A.T.: Thank ye. That particular track was indeed meticulously planned, starting way before Trail of the Unwary was even on the horizon. I had actually made a couple of previous attempts at portraying the concept of the hunt in song form, but those weren't up to par, so I scrapped them and began anew enough times until I found the composition that worked well enough. Also, "Hunt" actually consists of some of the very first kantele melodies I ever played when getting my first kantele, so it's a historically significant piece for me. I will definitely do these types of songs in the future, and I'm already nearing the completion of one such piece as I write this. I probably won't do a whole album's worth of them, because I don't want to be so limited as to compose every song with the same mentality, work process, or whatever one wants to call it.

The previous question scratched on this aspect a bit already: all of the releases come with sounds from animals or nature. Do you use field-recordings and record them yourself or what sources do you have for these samples? Why is it important for you to add these to your art? Are they the contrast to the instrument or rather something to support them?

A.T.: I do use field recordings and stuff from nature sound collections and such. I see them as a nice emphasis on the themes the songs represent. They generally stay in the background, and provide an added atmospheric effect. I don't intend on them dominating the songs, although I've been wanting to try out some ambient stuff where such things are actually in the foreground. I generally want them for support rather than contrast, but a little contrast isn't out of place either.

The lyrics of many of your works are in English, while the last output – Trail of the Unwary – comes with some Finnish ones as well. Why do you use your native tongue so late in your progression with the band and what made you to pick English as a dominant one?

A.T.: I started using English, because I wanted the listeners to be able to understand the lyrics and song titles. After a couple of releases I started using some Finnish because it's more personal to me, and also adds some ruggedness to the songs. Both languages have their own strengths, so I used whichever one that suited any given situation the best. I must also reveal that some songs have the exact same lines delivered in both languages, but in different settings. Have fun finding out which ones those are.

A question that has to be squeezed in somehow regards your first split album. How did this happen? Did Isafjord – a disbanded black metal band from Norway – contact you or were you interested in a split with them? How many copies exist of it?

A.T.: It was the idea of the label that wanted to release it. I jumped on the opportunity, because at that time it was unclear if Nest was ever going to be able to release anything else. That's also why I included the songs I considered the best ones at the time of the split. I don't remember the exact amount of how many copies of it are in circulation. Probably 500. I only got 25 copies myself, and they went surprisingly fast.

Quite peculiar seems to be that your second split also was done with a metal band, name with Agalloch. Is there a special reason you 'generally' tend to pick metal bands or were folk or ambient bands simply not interested? Do you consider doing some additional split albums in the future? Are there certain requirements that have to be met in order to spark your interest?

A.T.: The Agalloch split happened because I am friends with the guys. John actually suggested that split to me. We both agreed that it would be a nice little collaboration if I made the cover artwork for both bands, and that John and Don would contribute vocals and guitars respectively on the Nest song. It seems that the effort was successful, because people seem to generally like it a lot. I don't particularly seek out splits or collaborations, but I like working with friends, so such projects may come about in the future too.

You draw the artworks of Nest's releases by yourself. As you compose the music as well, it might be interesting to know from where you start. Do you plan the artwork before, while or after the compositions are done? Do you try to create a sort of unity between these two art forms?

A.T.: Most often I make the visuals after the music, but sometimes I have at least a couple of ideas of what I want the visuals to portray before or during the composition process. There is always a unity between the music and the visuals, although this is often very symbolic. As with other areas, I like leaving room for the listener's imagination whether he makes the same, or even any, connections between these two. Whatever the case, I really like hearing about the listener's interpretations.

What kind of tools do you use for your painting? Have you had lessons in this respect or are you self-taught so to speak?

A.T.: I'm mostly fond of Pastels, ink, pencils, colored pencils, and digital painting. You may notice that all of these are closer to drawing than painting with a brush. I'm much better with a drawing technique than with anything else. I'm mostly self taught, but I attended an art school for a year once, and got some good pointers from art teachers in other schools too. As with music, I like to explore, and find my way on my own when it comes to the visual fields.



According to the Metal Archives, you have also created artworks for the American band Agalloch as well. Have bands beside this one used one of your drawings for the albums? In case someone would be interested in the style you create, what prerequisites have to be met in order to use a drawing from you for their art? Do you have an online gallery or the sort?

A.T.: I've done very little work for other bands. The Nest / Isafjord split naturally had all artwork by me, Aarni has used a couple of my images and layouts, and that's about it. Nowadays I don't have the time to do commission work. I barely have time to do all my own projects. Nevertheless, anyone interested in my visual artwork (and musical projects + other stuff) can see them here: < "<http://atolonen.cjb.net/>" >

Do you draw on a constant basis or does this way of expressing yourself appear rather in 'fits'?

A.T.: It appears mostly in bursts, like all my other artistic endeavors. Also, it's limited by the time I have available. It's a shame really, because I'd love to be able to concentrate much more on visual stuff.

To close the main part on the Nest's music: how have the responses on your art have been over the years? Do you get a lot of feedback and take this into consideration once you start writing new compositions?

A.T.: I do get some feedback, both good and bad, and I'm pleased to say that nearly all of it has been constructive. I do appreciate all of it, and if I see some suggestions I agree with, I'll take them to heart. In the end I still have to be the final arbiter, because first and foremost I do this for my own reasons. Also, I can't please everyone, and attempting to do so would probably be in vain.

An aspect of pagan, or let us say, nature-influenced music is the use of symbolism in the pictures and in/on the albums. Why does such not appear in your works? Do you think the reliance on these is being overdone and generally too much of a cliché; something merely done to apply to a certain 'scene codex'?

A.T.: I do have symbolism, but it's very vague, and might not open up to anyone except me. For example, the wolverine and the squirrel, their positions, poses, where they meet, etc. on the cover of Trail of the Unwary all symbolize distinct things to me. The stories behind the lyrics of each song also hides its own miniature world. I guess I do this more in a way as to give depth to the work, instead of trying to formulate symbolic puzzles.

It seems that especially the nature thematic is very common in not just neofolk, or metal, but in many other musical genres too. This doesn't bother me in the slightest. I don't follow cliches, but I don't shun them either. I feel that doing either would be letting yourself be controlled by them. I actually really like trying to use cliches in a way that's not immediately clichéic. The listener can be the judge of how well I succeed in that.

Furthermore, how do you see the field of conflict between the dominant Christian mythology and the rising impact of pagan-oriented one?

A.T.: I guess conflict is inevitable between such things. How this becomes realized is yet to be fully seen. I guess it depends on how seriously the proponents of both take their ideologies, and how far they are willing to go not only defending their own views but to attack the others'.

Nest has participated on the Skepticism tribute album 'Entering the Levitation' with a cover of "The Gallant Crow". Could you write a bit about your motivation to participate on it and why you picked this track in particular?

A.T.: My main motivation for participating in that tribute was that I'm a huge Skepticism fan. They're literally on of my top 3 bands ever. When an opportunity to cover one of their songs for such a release came up, I immediately jumped aboard. I chose that song because I felt it provided me with a good amount of opportunities to shape the song into my own version. Also, Stormcrowfleet is historically the most important album for me (although all of their releases are excellent), so I wanted to cover something from it.

Interestingly, your interpretation of it is rather free and a track of 7:36 has been stretched to 13:54. Generally, bands like to play the music as it is, keep close to the original and try to present the listeners with the art that they know and not confronting them with something utterly fresh or different. Why did you wander off on such a large scale and how have the responses to your approach been?

A.T.: I prefer reinterpretations to actual 1:1 covers. As with all my "art" I do it primarily for myself, and if other people enjoy it, all the better. I did somewhat fear that people might think my version departs too much from the original, but I was surprised – and glad – to hear that most people have really liked it. I must also point out that I didn't use any guitars on the cover. It's all electric kantele again.

Your band Nest does not seem to be particularly active right now. The latest release dates back to 2007. Do you feel that you have said everything you want to say or is there a chance to hear some more from it in the future?

A.T.: I haven't released any Nest material because I've been busy with my other projects, and my time is unfortunately limited. When I do anything, I do it as properly as I can, and it'll therefore consume a huge amount of my time. It takes at least 2 years for me to compose an album nowadays, because I don't want to leave anything in a state I'm not completely satisfied with.

Let us talk a bit about your side-projects:

Would you mind laying out the background behind these a bit?

A.T.: Certainly. That's why I'm here.

Where Rivers End:

Is there a chance to hear an album from it? I liked the track that appeared on the 'Reynardine: The Visits of Mister Fox' sampler; released by the British label Larkfall. What is the status of the project anyway? Who is or was involved in it?

A.T.: This project has been on the back burner for quite some time. It began as an experiment between me, Oscar Strik (ex-Pantheist), and Tanner Anderson (Celestial). We had an idea to make a track for that compilation you named and each of us could try something a bit different from the stuff we had done with our



own bands. For example, I didn't even touch the kantele or synths in it. I played some Lapland drum, mixed it, and did a quick visual piece for it. I'd love to do some more, but time will tell.

Syven:

This band has a release forthcoming, doesn't it? How does it differ from Nest and what kind of music do you play in it? Are you 'alone' in this band?

A.T.: Syven has been the project I've concentrated the most on for the last couple of years. It's a darker, heavier continuation of Nest. This time around there's also a considerable amount of metal present because

I made a baritone electric kantele that serves well in providing suitable distorted walls of sound. It's a project consisting of me and my friend Andy who does the vocals this time around. He's a proficient bass baritone singer, but he also does growls, whispers, shamanic performances, etc. I'd recommend Syven to anyone who would want to hear a heavier version of Nest, especially if you liked songs such as "Hunt", "Harbinger of a Greater Winter", etc.

Tevana 3:

This band has spread their debut output very recently, didn't they? What kind of music can be found on it? What does the name refer to?

A.T.: Yep. This is a project of Mr. Holtiton (Poropetra, Korpiklaani lyricist). He's a friend of mine so I was happy to help out in this project. The debut album was released on his own label. It's oldschool metal in the vein of Celtic Frost, and the like, but played completely on electric kanteles. I actually built one of these kanteles for him. My involvement in this band consists of playing the bass, mixing the album, doing some artwork and the cover layout. All the songs are composed by Mr. Holtiton. I did write my bass lines, but nothing else.

What about DoomSquirrel, Todesbonden, Shape of Despair, The Mist and the Morning Dew? Are you still active in these?

A.T.: I'm not too active in those at the moment. I will help out each if they ask, but that situation hasn't come up lately. I was never a full member of any of those except The Mist. In that one we never got around doing anything after I joined, so I'm not featured on any recorded material. Almost the same happened with DoomSquirrel too. I've also contributed some kantele work for Saattue and Embassy of Silence. I also have an ambient project Unguarded Reliquary with which I made an album's worth of ambient soundscapes that I released for free, and give permission to anyone to use them for free on non-profit projects. You can get this project's stuff here: < <http://atolonen.cjb.net/unguardedreliquary.html> >

Some final questions – yes, we reach the end of this interview – regard the live experiences of your band. You have had some, at least the pictures on your Metal Archives entry suggest as much. How have the responses been and on how many occasions did you play so far?

A.T.: We've only played a couple of live shows. The responses were good enough, but it wasn't really something I enjoyed doing. As I've eluded before, I'm much more interested in composing than performing.

Considering the complexity of your art, how do you deal with it on stage? How many musicians were playing along with you and did you have to rely on some amount of sampling via electronic equipment?

A.T.: I would really like to be able to have a full band on stage for live shows. At the couple ones we did, there was only me and T.S., and everything else was played on a backing tape. It works, but I'm not really fond of it. On the other hand, to reproduce our stuff live would require quite a few of specialized musicians. I don't know many electric kantele players, for example. We'd also need at least 2 synth players capable of playing 2 synths simultaneously, Lapland drum players, etc.

Is there a chance to see some additional vinyl releases from Nest? Considering the wonderful designs of the releases, it would be nice to see them on a gatefold cover or a picture disk, don't you think?

A.T.: If the labels are interested I releasing vinyls, I'm more than happy to do so. At the moment there are plans for only CD releases, but who knows. Time will tell. I personally like vinyl designs very much too. They give you much more freedom to design the artwork, so I would definitely like to do more of them.

Are some of your releases still available? Is there a chance to see a re-release of your older stuff?

A.T.: Alas, I don't know if any previous material is available. It's the bane of a marginal band to be doomed into the realm of scarcity. I'd love to do at least a small reprint of all Nest material, so that time may come – maybe even soon. Stay alert.

How can people contact you?

A.T.: Anyone interested can write to me at < nest(AT)atolonen.cjb.net >. Just replace (AT) with the @ character. Can't be too careful with spambots.

Some final comments if you like

A.T.: Thank ye for this comprehensive interview. I wish you and all your readers the best of times among good music.

Interview & Review Section

Vowels

Interview with an Italian band number ... I do not know. How are you folks? Why do I interview and review so many bands from Italy?

Fine thanks. Well it's hard to say, probably because in Italy exist many interesting bands that in our country are not appreciated, so is natural to try to be known in other countries.

Why don't you start with introducing the band a bit? Who is currently involved in it and what role do they play?

Well the band is an entity shapeless, it morphed and will morph constantly. It has been also really problematic to us. You know identity problems and so on... But by this time we have found a kind of equilibrium with our last release "Hooves, leaves & the Death". Actually we are four, the drummer has just left the band as you know. Well the roles are not really important, we use as much instruments as we can...and obviously as we can play. Because of this also sessionists are welcome.

Your drummer has just left the band, right? Do you plan to look for a replacement or will the ever-powerful drum-computer take over this part? What would your opinion on these be anyway?

Yes the drummer's gone. We are already looking for another one. We do not judge who uses the computer as a drummer and we do not exclude to use some programmed rhythms in the future, but we certainly prefer the sound of an acusti drum set.

The pseudonyms differ from a lot of bands tend to use. Would you mind elaborating this aspect a bit?

Actually we use just the first letters of our names and surnames, it is not really original, but it's more serious than using weird names coming from fairy tales or from the Bible. It's not time anymore for battle names as we lost the battle.

Your band name is rather curious. Why did you pick it? What did you try to express through it?

The story behind the name is in reality not interesting and quite childish. Anyway it's a good name for a shapeless entity, you know, with this name we could play quite every kind of music.

Vowels was founded in 2008 and in the same year the first release saw the light of day already. Did the first music came somehow natural or had it been written before the band name was founded or the band was established?

The first demo came out as the marvelous first self handjob of a kid. We hadn't "wrote" anything before recording, it was pure instinct. Also the modality of recording mirrors this: infacts the demo has being done in just one day. Without doubts one of our worst work experiences from all the points of view. But we still like it a lot it's "punkish" and rough side, it's pure energy, it's fine.

When it comes to crafting the art, then how are the roles defined? In which way is the music composed? Has this changed over the years? Compared with your first demo, the latest tracks might strike the listener as having been created by an entirely different band.

Well of course changed in the years our way of composition. In the beginning Vowels was a pure garage gang, was complete chaos, no defined roles at all! Now it's really different. Chaos still remains, but with precise roles. One make the draft, the skeleton of the whole song and the others put their idea upon it. What's really different is that we do not compose anymore during rehearsals, but we put our ass on a chair and we record the drafts, so we can work easier and also in this way we can exploit to full the potentialities of the songs.

You wrote in the bio you sent to me: [we] never get (sic) really into the genre in his (sic) "pure" form. When I listened to your first demo, it was a strange experience in some respect; especially how you opened it – a folkish counterpoint. 'Anti' – this would be the title of the opener – seems to be quite an ample description. Why did you never 'got it' in terms of black metal? Do you have a certain 'fixed opinion' of this genre?

That's the turning point of the WHOLE thing. We are black and not black-metal. Don't misunderstand us, we really love this genre, but we think also that's really hard to play it. It's not simply a musical problem, and that's what many bands do not understand at all, for example all the bands coming from the hardcore scene trying to play the day after a perfect black-metal. Nowadays really few bands play black-metal. We are not in the list. We play a music inspired by it, with the same atmosphere. Same soul, different body.

What were your reasons to focus on it in the early days? You cannot neglect this.

Because we grew with it. Vowels started as a black metal entity, and did not come into it after. It came natural to play this genre, it wasn't something really thought. Burzum was in our stereo all the fucking day and so... Black metal was the start of the voyage, but also in the early days we did not want to make it in his pure form, we were attracted also by trip hop, new wave and post punk. We can say that we are more involved nowadays in it than in the past.

The three releases you sent to me present all the music written by you so far. When you listen to it, then you experience a band that seems to evolve over time. New elements appear in the releases, old ones vanish ... what makes you progress the way you do? Why do you need to change your art anyway? A lot of artists try to follow a much more conservative way and experiment on a small but steady scale.

We don't need to change, it simply comes. It has been also a big problem, we had a period without two compatible songs. The elements change because we are like children and we like to play, we would get bored always with the same toy, it's a dangerous way, but it's our way.



Somehow curious are the titles of your last two releases. They are rather a list of three words than anything else – 'Loss.Vows.Love.' also strikes me as a play with the band name. Is there a certain idea behind it?

There's no bound with the name or with the number "three". The bound that chains the words is in the concept.

A glance on your homepage and also the title of your latest release indicate some interest on your side in terms of mysticism. Could you elaborate a bit on this subject? Why did you pick the Ouroboros (on your homepage) for instance and also references to the Norse mythology? Is there a chance that you write about something non-European as well?

We do not have much in common with the Norse culture so it doesn't come from it. Ouroboros is an ancient symbol, it means, as you know, the immortal return of the peer, and all our latest concept is based on cycles, and you can find that symbol in almost European cultures. About writing something non-European, it's impossible. We are Europeans so everything we write is European. Anyway suggestions could come also from other cultures, in this period we are really interested in the "Walden" by H. Thoreau, and he was a Yankee.

Furthermore, the reference towards 'ancient pan-European myths' can place you in the wrong corner, because something similar is being used by right-wing scene and their 'evocation of a better society', which is supposed to have its foundation in some early stage of European history. How do you respond or deal with this aspect? Can you lay out your concept a bit?

Honestly we never thought about this association. Anyway we are interested in our culture, and we do not have nothing to deal with nazis. It's sad that love for folklore and roots is associated to extreme right parties. Vowels has nothing in common with any politic concept.

Can something of this be found in the music? Do you attempt to weave motives or arrangements into your art that tries to re-awake something of this 'old spirit'?

Well, we did not pick any "aria" from folkloristic songs, all is generated by us. We just tried to make all the thing dusty, ancient, far. We recorded lots of guitars to make the sound so far and indefinite. Maybe the voices could be more associated to something folkloristic and old. We thought to create something that could seem old in its essence, not to use old stuffs.

Anyway in the development of the concept in the future we'd like to use more rural instruments.

How would you describe your (Vowels') journey (or adventure) through the music realm so far? Where did you start and where are you now?

We started in a room under the ground. It's strange to us thinking about a Vowels' history, we just put a step after the other and we never looked back. So we really do not know how to answer. We think that we are just older than the early days with all the consequences.

'Hooves, Leaves & The Death', the title of your latest output, has quite a progressive and brave approach. The music has shifted towards something in which the atmosphere and how the elements play together seem to be more important than the riffs. There are power-chords accompanied by the drums in their attempt to create some aggressiveness, while soon later chants appear, while in the background the guitars have been reduced to the role of creating a texture. Is this how you want to create art? Do you feel that you have reached a concept with which you are 'satisfied'? Or might everything become even more 'artsy'?

Yes this is how we want to create art. We got a long time to make the last Ep and we thought everything carefully, finally we can say that we are quite satisfied, anyway complete satisfaction will be never reached, otherwise art would not exist.

For the first time we made quite exactly what we wanted to make. But we have a long walk in front of us, we recognize our immaturity, everything could change once again.



Interestingly, the second track 'Not Unlike a Falling Leaf' is an instrumental. How did this happen? It is also a rather experimental track.

It happened. We played a lot, and the song came instrumental. According with the original plans it wouldn't had to be instrumental, but when came the moment to record voices we changed idea, we made just some ethereal choirs in the end. We don't consider 'Not unlike a falling leaf' an experimental track despite it is an experimentation to us.

An aspect of Vowels' oeuvre is the use of contrasts; on the latest even more than on the earlier ones. What role do ambient and noise effects/textures play in this respect? Is there a chance that you might elaborate these to a larger degree; like the Italian band Rotorvator did/does it for instance?

Not many chances at all. We like noise effects and textures but "everything in its right place" as Radiohead said. We are really different from Rotorvator despite we like 'em a lot, but we are far more melodic, melody is something essential for us.

What about female vocals? Would such work with your music and help to create a greater variety of contrast?

Maybe in the future, why not?

Dynamics and density... how important are these aspects to you? When you listen to your first demo, then the black metal provides what it actually promises, while the recent one stretches it to some extent and comes in some sort of waves. Pikes can be found, but what tend to dominate are the troughs.

We like the image of waves you suggest, actually the ep is really wooden, but the image of a wave it's probably perfect in describing the music. Yes it goes flat but sometimes grows and then it breaks, flat again. Those aspects are really important in our art, in the earlies came naturally, but now are more elaborated and thought. "Waves" are a good allegory in describing everything, nothing goes straight..and also help to make music more interesting, more dynamic. All the songs are always really dense, and with this "wave movement" are also dynamic at the same time without losing in density.

The cover of your latest release reminds on a concept, which can be found in the folk scene: the replacement of the head with some kind of mask. Some kind of chimera is created through this. What is the background of the cover art and why did you keep your booklet (as well as your homepage) in such a dark colour?

We speak about the myth of the "savage hunt" which is a tale from the folklore, so we took different elements from traditions and rural rites, anyway we do not express just some elements of the european folklore, we tried to dig deeper creating something more ancient, searching for an Original root. About the dark colours it's an aesthetical necessity, it wouldn't be believable speaking about such things with a rose cover.

Two questions regarding your lyrics: What have been and are your reasons for 'singing' in English and why do you keep them secret? Neither the booklets, nor the homepage have them.

Well we don't know. Onestly we never though about....mmm we started singing in english because the music we did was ridiculous sang in italian, and we just followed that way instinctly. Just few italian bands can sing in our language without seeming clowns. We never wrote the lyrics because of space problems and we do not think that writing the lyrics in the site would have much sense, maybe in the future there will be in our booklets some words, certainly in the album there will be.

What music do you generally listen to and what bands had an impact on you over the years?

It's impossible to make a list. We always listened to LOTS of really different music, from classical to black metal, from electronic to new wave, folk, pop and everything came in our hands, because of this it's impossible to us indicate precise bands that had a strong impact on us, we're pretty confused people.

How about literature? Are there some books you like to turn to regularly/now and then?

About literature is quite the same that about music, we all read many books and really different autors, so there is no precise and strong bound with a particular one.

What about some live experiences? Did you have had any already or do you plan some? In case you did, how have these been?

We already had catastrophical experiences also opening to big underground bands, and we never had a good feedback from the fellows of the public, so we decided to stop making live appearances and to concentrate in composition. The matters in making lives were that we were too young and we never thought that the masquerade was sooooo important. Of course,also, we had not much experience and the sound made by the various "sound engeneers" was just repugnant. Anyway in the future we'd like to restart making concerts, although it will be quite hard from a technical point of view...

You wrote the following on your Facebook site: 'Sadly, on Twitter. A must of the modern Age.' Do you prefer the old days with handwritten letters and such? Have we reached the state of an information overkill? Why is it a 'must'? What would Orwell think of your modern 'glorious' communication technology?

Everything has its advantages and againsts. In these days it's a must to report to the web, also we do not like so much the net, we have to use it and obviously it has its advantages. Probably in these days we have too many informations, it's a costant bombardment of images, spots and big boobs...it's not time anymore to fuck with paper and pens made with feathers.

Orwell, probably would be saying ' Damn! I'm a fucking prophet, man!'. 1984 is not so far from reality...

Some final questions:

What releases do you have available and how can these be acquired?

We are treating for a deal with Sun&Moon records, so we hope that soon you could find our last work on its mailorder.

How can fans/foes contact you?

With a mail to vowels@hotmail.it. Please be formal and kind.

If you do not mind and if you are still motivated, you are free to write some closing comments.

Excuse our poor english.

Vowels (2008)

(Black Metal)

3 Tracks (CDr – Selfreleased) -_-_- (23:17)

'Anti', this would be the title of the opener and the first seconds are somehow 'anti'. Not some type of black metal is unleashed upon the listener, but rather a short folky guitar play ... and then the hounds are let loose. Yes, the first laugh is on them, Vowels. Just to clarify something: there are no further folk-influences on this album. Rather black metal with Baltak-inspired vocals, a Darkthronish atmosphere and some melodic guitar lines sum up the basic performance on the debut demo. Solo parts in the guitar can also be found as well as some unconventional song-writing attempts. Music like it has been offered to death and like it is spread on countless tapes from the so-called underground cannot be found here... luckily.

Minimalism, repetitiveness and simplicity in the arrangement do not appear here; at least not in a bothersome way. The opener 'Anti', by far the longest track on the debut demo, is of a rather complex nature and takes the listener through different stages and atmosphere. There is the strange opening, then some aggressive black metal, then a surprisingly long as well as outré solo middle part, an acoustic section that follows short after and towards the end the earlier black metal motive is recited again. Well, pretty



interesting for a first release actually. A bit daring but most certainly fascinating.

What about the rest then? 'Howling' and 'Stars' Voyager' have both one aspect in common: the use of slow and fast segments, which creates a juxtaposition stark counterpoints. It is something you have to get used to, because not many bands would bring their music to such extreme. Maybe these two compositions suffer from a lack in length and a further elaboration of the ideas would make them a bit more accessible. In some respect everything ends a bit too early, because the opener provided the listener with a considerable amount of facets, which are not apparent in the other two compositions in such a level.

The production is raw, but not on excessive levels; also the balancing is not too bad: drums a bit too noisy, vocals a bit too much in the background. From a different perspective it would be fair to say that these aspects add a charming touch to the band's performance and make this demo stand out a bit from the floods that drown the underground. Nevertheless, the debut output by the Italian band Vowels seems to be more for a connoisseur, then for the black metal enthusiast.

Some references:

Imagine that Krallice has met Gorgoroth and Baltak (vocals) with some additional progressive elements thrown in and you get somewhere close to this first demo of Vowels.

Note:

the tracks on this demo were later re-released for a split album with the German band Wulfgar.

Loss.Vows.Love (2010)

(Black Metal, Dark Rock, Experimental, Ambient)

3 Tracks (CDr – Ewig Records) - _ _ _ (21:40)

With their second output – ignoring the split – the band decided to venture in a different direction and add new facets to their oeuvre. Even though the vocals might point towards a continuation in the black metal dominated style, this impression has to change once the venture in the depths of this release has begun. More rockish as well as more experimental the art has become. Furthermore, the metal guitar play only a smaller role here, while less distorted and aggressive ones have taken over.

Nevertheless, the tension in the music is still there, the dynamics as well. 'It Blossoms', the opener of this ep, merely presents the concept in a slightly watered down version. The calmer parts make up a considerable share now and the listener will experience such not only in the first but also in the last track, which would surprise the listener with a calm ambient and field-recording mixture once half the length has passed.

Another interesting aspect of this ep is the way the music progresses. There is a continuous flow here and also the short silent disruption at the end of 'Sun' is not really able to provide an argument to counter this. It somehow feels like the idea continues with the succeeding composition and this gap works as a bridge instead of a break.

What has changed compared with their first demo are also the vocals. Here, they are more in a 'general' black metal style and the Baltak-inspired one seem to be a relict from the past now. Now some screaming, then some growling and even some distorted kind of speaking – in vain of what is generally being used in the depressive bm branch – makes an appearance.

Each of the compositions is different. The opener is a mixture between dark rock and black metal, while the 'Sun' reminds me on a doomy version of 'Kreator' for reasons hard to explain and the last track 'Arrival' is not even metal anymore. Maybe this – or these – title(s) should be taken literally. With the progression and evolution of the band, the concept evolved and reaches as kind of blossom, but has not been exposed to the

light of our far away star so far. Once this stage has been reached, fragments fall out of it and a vague body of art remains – which would explain the power-chords in the track in question. In the final compositions – Arrival – Vowels have reached their destination and a strange and rather unfamiliar kind of music exposes itself. It has not much in common with the old days and the black metal offered on the debut demo. Rather, like in an organic body, this one aspect has to take up the challenge with all other facets of it, which results in a kind of balance.

'Loss.Vows.Love' offers no consistency whatsoever. More in the style of a roller-coaster is the trip the listener has to take in this output. It feels like 'Vowels' experimented a bit with song-writing, arrangements and atmospheres, which was later put on a CD. Once someone has listened to it completely the question remains where this band like to progress towards; what hints are presented on the further development. In terms of this release such is impossible to answer. There is no red line, there is no complete evolution of the ideas to make foreshadow the path the might wander on.

To give a recommendation for this ep is a tricky thing indeed. Maybe those, who like to see a band elaborating on various concept and approaches might want to give this release a try. Again: this is not a pure metal output... it has facets of this genre but nothing more.

Hooves, Leaves & The Death (2011)

(Post-Black Metal, Post-Rock, Experimental, Ambient)

2 Tracks (CD – Self-released) -_-_- (20:07)

And now for something completely different.

Yes indeed, the Italian revamped their musical concept again and present on two tracks two approaches which have not much in common with each other. This is by no means an exaggeration. Black metal had been their starting point, they progressed then into an experimental hybrid between black metal, dark rock and ambient, while their latest output takes an even different direction.

More contrasts and a clearer identity. These two aspects are important when it comes to actually describe the



performance of Vowels. A trip through the first track on Hooves, Leaves & The Death reveals that the band seems to have a better idea of the music they want to create. In certain limits this kind of music had already found its way on the previous output, but Vowels gave they impression of being unwilling to leave the safe shores of the early days behind. The compositions on 'Loss.Vows.Love' oscillate between a too conservative and a too experimental approach, but times leaving a slightly ambiguous impression.

'Hooves, Leaves & The Death' the separation is even more extreme, yet when it comes to the quality of the song-writing and the arrangements, then Vowels have taken a considerable leap in the right direction. While the opener is some kind of atmospheric post-black metal / ambient hybrid, the second track comes without any vocals and metal influences. Judging merely from the sound and such, it would be hard to fathom the same project between these contrasting approaches.

The 'post' aspect had been mentioned in the previous paragraph, but the 2011 output is not the first that has them. In some levels these made an appearance on the previous ep already. Not only in the riffs, also in the arrangements such can be discovered and these add a kind of 'easiness' to the music. The conservative approaches of the old days are a relict of the past by now, as the black metal influences are almost negligible by now. First, the vocals have shifted towards a more cleaner style – chant-like ones have taken over, while screams are only allowed to add their share as the opener is nearly over – and also the dynamics point into a different direction; as outlined in the interview, the music appears in waves and proceeds in troughs and peaks. Tempo, atmosphere and complexity moves not on a constant level throughout the music, but tends to swing to and fro between extremes.

Even more so in the second track. Generally, instrumentals with a considerable length are a bit of a tricky thing, due to the difficulties to keep up the tension and the listener interested 'Not Unlike a Falling Leaf' opens rather calm and progresses only slowly through the motives. Metal? No any more. Rather a mixture between post-rock and ambient had been used for this composition. It builds up slowly but has some nice facets and ideas; the middle part with the cello is quite atmospheric for instance. Maybe it is a bit too minimalist and maybe a bit more of complexity would have had a positive effect, but the verdict whether this would be appropriate or not depends on the viewpoint; a fan of the post-black genre might request a bit more, while someone with an ambient background could be satisfied with the performance already.

One reference would be the Chinese band 'Dopamine', while others like Lantlos or Amesoeurs are too heavy and too focussed on the black metal; in terms of the latter of these two the calm parts show some similarity though.

'Hooves, Leaves & The Death' provides a glimpse on the progression of 'Vowels' and where they might like to venture towards. Longer compositions have 'always' been part of their releases, but only on their latest one they create a somewhat coherent picture. The flow and the consistency has increased, which makes it more likely to enjoy them. Compared with the debut demo for instance, the 2011 one lacks the randomness in the arrangement and in the song-writing. Nevertheless, the music still feels like incomplete and not entirely convincing. Maybe the next one will help to make things a bit clearer, but you should get this release ... which is more on the post-rock/metal ambient side than on the black metal one.

To sum the impressions up:

The band started in black metal, changed their style over the years and have reached a state in which their original style of music can only be discovered in certain facets. It seems natural to perceive their concept as being in a kind of progression in which the first milestone has not been reached, yet. How they will sound is something only time will be able to tell. Will they revisit their early release and increase the heaviness again – and follow more established bands in this respect – or will they get more experimental still and elaborate their ideas further?

It is hard to give a clear recommendation here, because each output point to a different kind of fan.

Deathlike

Hell-o there. It is good to see your band 'active' again ...

Let us begin where we left off in the last interview:

You had written some music for a new release and scrapped most of it. What happened next? Did some of the stuff make it on this new recording?

No, not this time. All the songs on "Apega" Except "Deathlike" was written after the "Enmity" released I feel that these 3 new songs have a different feel than those songs, and I wrote these songs after each other quite fast but spend some time arranging them. But the next release is already under planning and it looks like some of the stuff we trashed for "Enmity" will surface on this release, although re-arranged of course.

The band consists of two members at the moment: Roy and Tormod. Are both involved in the song-writing or is this aspect being dealt with? What about recording, mixing and all this stuff?

When I started Deathlike it was supposed to be a solo project with help from friends. But today Tormod is a permanent member. So far he hasn't done any song writing for Deathlike except his solos/leads, we do re arrange things now and then together, but not much. We throw ideas back and forth but he is master of his own solos/leads. But for the next release he has actually done some song writing that we are planning to use.

On Apega there were just the two of us in the studio most of the time. And we like it like that. There were some plans of a bassist joining us on Apega but that didn't work out at the time, we have to see if it will work in the future, but at the moment things work really good with just two persons as regularly members.

When it comes to recording Apega it was recorded 3 different places. During the sessions I moved to a different apartment so I had to move my studio too. At was a bit chaotic but it worked out ok. After the sessions was finished I send it to mastering and pressing, I have no idea how to master so is better that some else do this part.

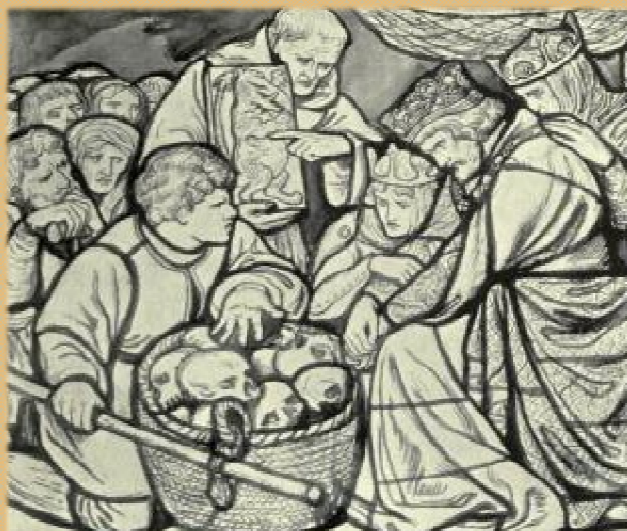
But the next one will be recorded in my new "Golden Ar Studio" so hopefully things will be a bit more organized.

Not many will know this band, so why don't you lay out some of its history. What kind of music do you play and what have your reasons been to pick this particular type of metal? The description used by you (on your MySpace profile) 'old school low-fi technical death metal' does give the impression you want to create some sort of counterpoint to the modern stuff.

Well Deathlike was born out of the ashes of a band that I played in with 2 other guys, all we did was a few rehearsals before we split and went our separate ways. I think the description 'old school low-fi technical death metal' is more suitable for the first demo as most of the songs was written for the other band, (yes I know I should update the MySpace profile more often but the new design is such a pain in the ass...) the second demo shows a different side of Deathlike, slower and longer tracks was introduced. And the new ep again a bit different, here there are no really fast songs, just some faster parts and all the songs are quite long. And the next will be even a bit different again.'

But basically yes I do try to make some kind of counterpoint the modern metal. Much of the new stuff sound in my ears sterile and a bit soulless, I will not go into details here why... But no matter if Deathlike plays a short and fast song or slow and heavy with Deathlike I will always try to keep it Olds School. Sometime tehcnical sometime just heavy.

I listen a lot of different kinds of music, all different kinds of metal, folk , trance, industrial, and more, but I keep coming back to Death Metal, especially the older bands, guess it's my favourite music generally.



So what kind of music do we play? Well my personal view is that is old school Death Metal with some Doom elements...please let me know what you think...

What strikes me about your music is this dense noisy wall of guitars in the background. Enmity had this already, but on the new one this aspect sounds more powerful as well as vicious. On the one hand it creates heaviness, but does it not make it difficult to add additional elements; like the keyboards in 'Apega'?

Actually no, not for me anyway. The way I write the keyboard parts is like a counterpart to the guitars. There just some small part here and there to create some atmosphere not much really, but when one use it as little as we do I thing the effect of them becomes more effective.

When it comes to the guitars...yes the wall of noise is on purpose, we try to get the heaviest guitar sound as possible to go with the riffs, but not easy to the get clarity so you can hear what we actually are playing. But it goes a bit back to what I talked about earlier.

We try to create a atmosphere that is as you said dense, and as heavy as possible, a Gibson Les Paul into a Mesa Boogie rectifier wouldn't work for us, it sounds a bit too nice in a way, but its probably the most used combination out there...

The guitars and guitar sound is the main element in our music, everything else is just kind of wrapped around it in a way.

The last track on this recording would be 'Deathlike'. When you take a look at the discography of your band, then you will notice that is has appeared on the first output as well. Is this basically a re-recording or did you change something? Why did you pick this one track after all?

I needed one more track for the ep,. I had some stuff I could use, but wasn't really happy with it. Then I got the idea to go back and use the "Deathlike" from the first demo. The reason was that this was the first track I wrote for Deathlike, many of the songs on the first demo were written for the other band I talk about earlier. I really like this track but was not one 100 % happy with the original version. I wanted better vocals and dirtier guitars. It's basically a re recording yes, but the drums have some changes and the guitar solos are different. It also it fits well with the 3 other tracks.

From your opinion, how does this CD differ from the preceding Enmity one? The guitars sound different and more powerful and also the programming of the drum-computer is better.

While Enmity featured both long slow and heavy, and faster technical stuff, Apega is a bit heavier and slower. You will find some faster parts but no really fast songs.

When it comes to the recording and mixing etc and also the quality of the music itself we just tried to make things better, we spend more time working out the harmonies and other details that you may not think of when you listen to it. I remember some of the lead work on the title track we tried many different ways before we were happy, we tried to think of all the details without making it sounding to "processed or sterile" Also giving each instrument the same attention and time to make it sound as "right" as possible.

Interestingly, you have not offered a cover version of any of your releases. Is there a track, which you would like to record in the future and are you able to reveal it already?

So far it has been more important to show what Deathlike is about musically, than recording covers. But there are some songs I would like to cover, not what people would expect it think, to uncertain though to say anything at the moment...

Apega is the third and latest output by you. What does the name refer to? Could you also elaborate on the content printed in the booklet?

The name Apega refers to an ancient torture device invented by a Spartian king called Nabis. This device was like a primitive robot made to look like a women wearing a dress. The victim would be lead towards it and when close to it the Apegas arms would embrace the victim. The arms had hidden spikes so the victim would be trapped and slowly bleed to death. I found this to be a bit ironic as sometime a modern relationship could sometimes feel the same way...The cover shows a skeleton praying, like praying for its life but is already dead

which in my head could refer to both situations...and the interesting and a bit funny thing is that the Apega was supposed to modelled after the kings wife...makes you wonder what his thoughts about his wife where. In the booklet you will find some short excerpt of the lyrics. I didn't want to print the whole lyrics for the songs because I want people to make their own idea what the whole thing is about

Apega comes pro-printed. Is there a chance to see your other and older stuff spread in such a way, too? Do you plan some re-releases?

Hmm... I had a lot of people saying they would like to see The Black Gate 'The Serpent Who Slept Dead' remastered and pro-printed. I would like this to but it cost money which at the moment I don't have. When it comes to Deathlike I have no such plans at the moment, but it may happen in the future. There is certainly stuff I would like to redo...

There is also "Wolf Night" which appears on the "Norsk Urskog Metal Sampler Vol 3". How did this happen? This seems to be some sort of underground sampler for bands from Norway, right?

Yes this is an underground sampler for unsigned Norwegian bands. This was an idea of Harald Eilertsen from the Norwegian thrash metal band Imbalance (check out their new album "Period Three Implies Chaos", its good"). This sampler is not for sale but is disturbed to managements, radio, promoters etc.

I known Harald for a few years now and last year he asked if I had any music I wanted to participate with for this sampler, we had no finished song but we participated with a remixed version of "Plaines Of Meggido". Then he contacted me again this year, but we didn't have any suitable songs this time either, but we went into the studio and recorded "Wolf Night" in just a few days (the drums took a bit longer). A bit different song from what you will find at Apega but we are very satisfied with the result...what do you think?

What about your other band, The Black Gate? Is there any chance to hear something new from this one as well at some point in the future?

Well it was 5 years between the two last demos, and you mentioned that you hoped it would not be the situation next time and I agree with you, but at the moment I don't have enough quality material

I am working on new songs and have one finished as a working copy, 3 other ones are under "construction". I am hoping for a release sometime mid/late 2012...

Do you have some music available right now?

Not really, just some pre-prod stuff...

In case someone wants to send you an e-mail or so c or listen to your music. How can this be done?

For Deathlike check out this link <http://www.myspace.com/deathlikeband/music/songs?filter=featured>

And for The Black Gate this one <http://www.myspace.com/theblackgatemetal>

I am working on making some YouTube pages for both bands, but am not finished yet.

Deathlike can also be found on FaceBook at this link:

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Deathlike/161231493931426?ref=ts>

I can be contacted at both band mails but its easier catch me at this address hatework666@hotmail.com

If you want to buy the new Deathlike ep check out this link, this web store I would highly recommend. <http://www.aftermath-music.com/item.php?id=7337>

Some closing comments ... if you like

Hmm...Don't think so... just want to thank people for the support, and thank you for the interview.

HAILZ & CHEERZ...

Deathlike – Apega

(Norway; Death Metal)

5 Tracks (CD – Self-released) - _ _ - (30:28)

<http://www.myspace.com/deathlikeband>

Two years have passed and of the scrapped tracks nothing has made it on this release. New stuff had been written, arranged and recorded for this output, but you cannot mistake the band ... in case you are a bit familiar with it. Even though it might be too far-fetched to describe these aspect as characteristic, an adventure through the musical realm of 'Roy' – the main person behind 'Deathlike' as well as 'The Black Gate' – reveals some constancy; despite the different approaches used for the bands. It is this earthen dark sound, which you find again and again but each time executed in a slightly changed version.

Deathlike's music is massive. It has a nasty and sick touch to it and this impression is created by the dense guitar layer in the background. Like the sound of countless tanks that grind down the landscape, this Norwegian band moves on a path somewhat similar to Both Thrower but keeping the tempo generally a bit down and the art less furious. Maybe Deathlike is the demented little brother of the British band. Anyway, on top of this one characteristic element – already on 'Enmity', the preceding debut album, the concept had been approached in a similar fashion, but without the impact it has today, which is due to the improvements in the production –, additional guitar motives and solo parts were woven.



This is old-school death metal. This is music that is noisy and a bit muddy at times. Interesting is how the other band Roy is involved in, tends to shine through in certain levels. On example: The title song of 'The Serpent Who Slept Dead' had a longer and very distinct slow middle part and something similar can be found on the second track of Apega as well; but the build-up is different as the music fades out rather slow and does not take up the tempo of the first segment again. Deathlike's music combines various tempi into a final products, which is able to combine a certain complexity with catchiness. Maybe this half-growling by Roy gets a bit tiring and maybe some additional facets/elements would create a counterpoint to the grinding guitar wall in the background.

Deathlike:

Well, a comparison of both versions reveals a considerable difference between these. The old one had some powerless vocals and some amount of rawness in the sound. In contrast to this, the latest one comes much improved. A bit more bass would have been neat though, as the guitars lack a bit of it. Actually, it would not hurt to change this aspect on all other compositions on Apega as well.

To sum everything up a bit.

Interestingly enough, the band progresses on the path which had been presented on 'Enmity' and presents music that is similar in the concept but improved in the sound. Apega, this old instrument of torture, delivers what its name promises: a powerful, anti-modern beast of death metal. What might bother some listener is the drum-computer, whose play has a slightly negative impact on the performance, but maybe the band will be able to deal with this aspect in the future. Well, this is a really good release and it is recommended to all those who have a fancy for old-school death metal and are sick and tired of pointless breakdowns as well as hysterical screams.

Wolf Night (4:56)

As discussed in the interview, this track is part of the Norsk urskog Metal Sampler Vol. 3 and in style it is close to the style the band offers on Apega. Well, one difference would be the length, which is considerably shorter and another can be found in the use of a sample: the howling of a wolf; adds a nice touch to the atmosphere. Aside from this, this composition offers straightforward death metal with a longer solo part and not many compromises.

Interview section

Ebonillumini

Hey there... I hope you are alright. Who am I talking to?

Greetings you are talking with J.D.Tait and Christina Poupoutsi

Ebonillumini, it a strange name and combined with the title of the debut release – The Ebon Channel – then a certain direction becomes clear. Nevertheless, some might suspect that the ‘illumination’ of ‘ebon’ seems to be the underlying message of the name. Therefore, why don’t you shed some light on how your band name is supposed to be understood and what reasons did you have for picking it?

J.D. Tait (The Monk): Since ‘The Monk’ & ‘The Maiden’ come from very different musical backgrounds we felt we needed an appropriate name to match our differences.

CHRISTINA (The Maiden): The name Ebonillumini should be understood as; ebon/ebony/ dark/black..... illumini/illuminate/ to see, or, dark and light co existing in equal harmony.

Has there been a source of inspiration in terms of this topic? This place – the Ebon Atoll – does not sound like a place which is mentioned too often.

CHRISTINA (The Maiden): The Ebon Channel was discovered in our research to compile the bands profile, and quickly became a source of inspiration to us. It has certainly contributed to the work and continues to do so in the form of our debut album.

J.D. Tait (The Monk): The channel can be found in the Pacific Ocean & is the site for the first ever test of a hydrogen bomb carried out by the USA. The EC is a place we revisit on our forthcoming debut album as part of conceptual journey around the Pacific Ocean.

‘Ebonillumini’ in the sense of an imperative – like in a conjuration – or as a statement?

CHRISTINA (The Maiden): Oh always a conjuration we’d say!

What have the intentions been when you founded this band?

J.D. Tait (The Monk): For me personally my intentions were to create a band steeped in dark atmosphere. I had featured dark passages within my other projects but never a project that solely immersed itself in the dank mist laden nocturnal landscapes of my mind.

Another intension of mine was to bring The Maiden’s vocal style to the Black Metal scene. Since most of the female vocalists in avant-garde BM generally go for an ethereal floaty feel or just try to replicate the male snile. I felt she could bring something unique to the table.

CHRISTINA (The Maiden): My intentions with the project have been in the hope of creating music that explores channels to the darker sides of personality within human experience. Not all is rosy in the garden all of the time right?

I had now found a balanced outlet for my creativity as my previous bands and projects were more 'flying a flag of hope', with a predominately positive message. Now I was able to begin work on expressing the darker, more sinister aspects of my own personal life experiences. Ebonillumini is a perfect vessel for me to express the darker sides of myself (or another's) darkness, illuminate it as a means of acknowledgment and acceptance without denial. In turn this gives me a full creative balance & harmony in my song writing and personal artistic development. Allowing me to get down and dirty into the decaying organic matter that lay beneath the rose bush, to tell it how I see, and feel it, from that perspective.

Seeing as the first release came out in the same year as the band was founded, you must have had a definite perspective and intention when starting it, or?

CHRISTINA (The Maiden): Our intentions upon creating the project manifest from a desire to be as imaginative as we possibly could, incorporating fantasy and reality in equal measure and fusing our own individuality and ideas together.

Who are the members in this band and what is their role in it?

J.D. Tait (The Monk): Christina Poupoutsi – Vocals & Keys – J.D. Tait – Guitar, Bass, Keys & Vocals, & recently added to the ranks is drummer, Andre Thung.

Did you know each other before or have been involved in another project together at some point?

J.D. Tait (The Monk): The Maiden and I had originally met via a band I was touring with in '08. Shortly afterwards we decided to merge our creative niche's of darkness & light & form Ebonillumini. In '09 I also joined Christina's prog/psych rock band The Higher Craft (THC; www.thehighercraft.com) which in turn would also recruit Andre in 2011.



CHRISTINA (The Maiden): Andre had originally arrived to the UK to join with THC, despite his location being in Oslo, Norway (ourselves being based in London, England). When he heard Ebonillumini he showed a keen interest in what we were doing and was eager to be apart of it.

How does the actual process of song-writing turn out?

CHRISTINA (The Maiden): We all write and each individuals contributions are shared and worked upon, whether it be whole compositions or segments from each merging together to make a whole.

Is it as separated as the line-up suggests: one person involved with the vocals while the other handles the instruments?

CHRISTINA (The Maiden): No, not at all, each member as a high level of writing skills, and are multi-instrumentalists. However the lyrics are left in the hands of the maiden solely at this point in time.

How long did it take you to get the tracks written, composed and recorded?

CHRISTINA (The Maiden): The Ebon Channel E.P. took about 4 months.

Was it easy to get started?

CHRISTINA (The Maiden): Yes music making is what we do on a full time basis so wasn't hard to get the project off the ground.

The Ebon Channel had been recorded ... where? Did you use a studio or how has the process of recording/mixing and such been handled?

CHRISTINA (The Maiden): The demo ep was made at our home based studios, The Bridge Gate and The Chalice Chapel. It was produced, mixed and mastered by J.D.Tait.

The opener has an interesting structure: while the first two paragraphs as well as the last two of the lyrics are sung by a female voice, the middle one appears in an almost intelligible black metal style. Why this stark contrast and separation in terms of the sounds?

CHRISTINA (The Maiden): This is part of the sole purpose to combine dark and light...Actually, such can be discovered throughout the entire release.

What are your reasons for avoiding a duet ... or something oriented on it?

CHRISTINA (The Maiden): There was no conscious effort not to duet; it just turned out that way.

J.D. Tait (The Monk): In the future we will defiantly be experimenting more with our voices individually & combining the two.

Would an inversion of the current approach be reasonable as well? An aggressive opening/end with a calm middle part – is this a concept, which can be imagined as well, or is it necessary to build-up the tension and atmosphere instead of lashing out at the listener from second one?

J.D. Tait (The Monk): There will be a vast array of compositional approaches on future material, after all there's only so much you can do in four songs.

In terms of the song-writing the references towards '...in the woods' are quite apparent – at least from my perspective; in the sense mixing their oeuvre a bit. Other reviews refer to Arcturus for instance. How do you see both of these bands? Do you enjoy their art and did they play a role in terms of the influences?

J.D. Tait (The Monk): There will probably always be a thread of Arcturus in all my projects whether it be cheesy pop or complex BM. As soon as I heard 'La Masquerade Infernale' my musical world was to never be the same again. As far as In the Woods... are concerned it was more the atmosphere of 'The Heart of The Ages' album that I was trying to capture. This may or may not continue. & yes both bands are the dogs bollox. **The Ebon Channel has black metal influences, but from a broader perspective it is impossible to describe it as such. Did you feel it way necessary to break out of the done-to-death approaches of this genre and elaborate its core elements in a new way? Besides, how do you see the development of the black metal scene?**

J.D. Tait (The Monk): Any project that I am involved with will always be looking to evolve & be its own unique entity.

The best thing about BM is its freedom to experiment (even though some people would have you believe otherwise) & mood shift. Whether you have a basic grasp of an instrument or a master musician, both can be allowed to produce masterpieces & because of this Black Metal will always continue through time to develop moments of sheer genius & utter shite.

Why does your music need this extreme contrast anyways? On the one hand there is an extreme calmness, while on the other there is an intense and rather aggressive one. Why is it impossible to focus on one instead of two?

J.D. Tait (The Monk): In the future we will focus on two & on one & even throw in three & four.

As 'The Monk Marshall' is also active in (at least?) two black metal bands, how difficult is it to differentiate the art played in these from the art of Ebonillumini? Is there a difference between these bands in terms of composing or crafting the art?

J.D. Tait (The Monk): It's not difficult to differentiate between them all since they all serve as a different need to my musical vomitings. I'll lay it all out...The Meads of Asphodel has served my no holds barred approach to BM, absolutely no limitations to genre jigory pokery but always with a BM spine...Worms of Sabnock takes a more catchy BM approach while fusing folk elements & ranting my political & Atheist views...The Higher Craft is more about keeping a psyche rock spine & infusing other elements such as BM...Ebonillumini is my dark corner keeping a more consistent mood than my other bands, I could go on but I won't.

As far as composing, it's fairly similar between them all. Maybe a variance of working alone or with a large number of people is one difference. One definite constant is plume of silky green smoke.

Ebonillumini did something that tends to bother me on a CD: an ambient track placed somewhere on the album, but not at the opening or the end. Please explain your reasons for doing so.

CHRISTINA (The Maiden): Ultimately the Jung track in question was born from the 19th century piano I own and our want to include it on the EP. The Piano is very old, worn out and unable to be re-tuned due to the split wood where the pins sit, so at best it is a nice ornament and not really suitable for the constraints of our musical wants. But we found the discordant elements fitted well with the approach of chaos and the element of dark insanity we were seeking.

As a German I am surprised about the title of it: Jung. What do you refer to? Would you mind giving some hints on the samples, which appear in it? What would be their source?

CHRISTINA (The Maiden): The source of the narration was taken from a book titled Psychic Energy by M.Ester Harding with a foreword by C.G.Jung. The book had been in my possession for some years and the spontaneous outreach to include some words not of my own saw the inclusion of the Jung text, as it was the first book I had randomly picked from my bookshelf.

Who is responsible for the lyrics? Can you elaborate a bit on the context and your reasons for avoiding the all too common verse-chorus form?

CHRISTINA (The Maiden): I write intuitively, a free flowing expressive process, a creative form of writing, I think it's termed poetry. No long or thoughtful planning goes into any of my lyrics. However a song and the message I feel to convey manifests from the flavours/moods of what the music has to offer me to work with.

Do you use books and mythology as references or where do you take your inspiration from?

CHRISTINA (The Maiden): Yes I have used books and mythology in my work before. Lyrically the path is set from a source of experience at various places in time within my life's experiences. I include these elements of learning occurring in my world or dream state from which my inspiration lyrically manifests, or I will call upon my reserve of writings collated over the past 25/30 years.

Your lyrics give a sense of mystic as well as accusation. The approach is rather metaphorical with a certain sense to tell some sort of 'story'. You feel a certain black metal spirit, but executed on a less direct and therefore rather coded message. Such would cover the opener, while the others have rather a reference to (nature) mysticism. Could you elaborate a bit on the background of the tracks and why you picked these topics as well as the way they were written?

CHRISTINA (The Maiden):

Into The Forests So true: Is a fantasy draped tale of a young maiden, lost in the depths of a romantic love story uniting with her twin flame in the backdrop a magical ancient forest. This was a piece I had written some years before I met J.D. and upon hearing it, he knew instantly that this song could be made into something.

Evident in void: Lyrically this song manifest from a transitional period in my creative career. An awkward situation occurring in my life around the time I met J.D. saw me locked into an event with others which encompassed positive and negative energy in full battle.

Wax Tribe: Again the lyrics were another outpouring of my then current situation whereby shadows were never far away. I used the opportunity to work the emotions from the situation into a creative platform to create an exorcism of the event for me.

Jung: Spontaneous inclusion.

Where did you take the cover from? This insect (?) carrying a torch looks quite peculiar.

CHRISTINA (The Maiden): The Diptera is symbolic visual guide for all seekers of their own 'Ebon Channel' within. The Sacred Lantern is paramount and is the guiding force behind the Monk & Maidens concept. We shall be revealing more about him in future releases.

How has the feedback been so far?

CHRISTINA (The Maiden): The feedback for Ebonillumini has been tremendous considering we have had no formal advertising. We have been fortunate to receive some truly great online reviews, and lots of record label interest too. Within the past 2 years the internet has been awash with ebon torrents even though we've not produced anything new for three years!

Are you satisfied with the way the album turned out?

CHRISTINA (The Maiden): Yes completely satisfied now we are including real drums. We are very critical in the fact we won't just pass something unless it really moves us in some way. The album has many layers which satisfy our creative stimulus, which is predominately the platform we rise from.

J.D. Tait (The Monk): We have a simple philosophy. Give everything we've got & if doesn't sound good enough don't release it.

Is there any chance to see this band hit the stage?

CHRISTINA (The Maiden): Yes, plans for live are at the fore front of our minds going into 2012. The addition of Andre has now made this a reality.

What about some new music? Your MySpace blog suggests as much, but nothing has surfaced so far.

J.D. Tait (The Monk): We had to put Ebon on ice for some time while myself & Christina concentrated on recording The Meads of Asphodel 'The Murder of Jesus The Jew' & The Higher Craft 'Quest Into The SteppingstoneAge' albums. We had already completed the Ebonillumini debut album In 2010, and since recruiting Andre we decided to delay the release & re-record the drums having already used programmed drums on the album originally. The Ebonillumini debut album will now be ready for early to mid 2012 to coincide with our arrival on the live circuit.

In the meantime to plug the gap & introduce Andre's talents we will be releasing a new EP in the dusk of 2011, which is at this moment very near to completion. We also plan on shooting a video to accompany the release.

Do you still have some music available?

CHRISTINA (The Maiden): Yes, The demo e.p. is still available for purchase for £3 +p/p. All payments should be made thru paypal to this email address solarstar@tiscali.co.uk

How can people get in touch with you?

CHRISTINA (The Maiden): Via our myspace: www.myspace.com/ebonillumini

Or facebook <http://www.facebook.com/ebonillumini>

Or email ebonillumini@live.co.uk

Also keep a look out for our new website which will be up in time for the new EP

www.ebonillumini.com

Some closing comments, phrases and whatnot if you like:

J.D. Tait (The Monk): We look forward to unleashing the new ep upon you all and the forthcoming album thereafter. We will urge you look out for the new website and video to coincide with the next release, and we look forward to our first live appearance in 2012.

Hexentomb

Hello there, everything fine right now? Let us talk about your band a bit ...

Hi dude yes fine (as can be life in these days of horror and sorrow..)

Hexentomb ... what have the reasons for picking this name been? Is it the burial ground or the one to practise dark ceremonies?

Well why Hexentomb you ask, because we like very much the words-game that lies between the imaginary sense of a wicked burial ground and so on, with the atmospheres that can be evoked; and the german literary translation that would sound as something similar to "the end of witchery" intended as the end of a way to trust and have faith in religious and spiritual Objects in order to retrieve the true power of acting from outside Man inside him again. So these two concepts lead us to the thing that should be the shape of Hexentomb: places and time are center of something no more performed by humans, machines and ruins as witnesses of his failure.

Interestingly enough, even though the Metal Archives lists your date of foundation as 2004, it took you up to 2007 to get your first release out. Why this interval? Were you uncertain about the direction you wanted to progress? Were you unsatisfied with the tracks you have had so far ... or what?

Since 2004 we had factually no line-up, just me and Hellhound writing material and trying to get the possibility of recording our music. In 2006 Ogre joined us and we recorded a demo, still unreleased with the raw shape of the first songs presented in 'Far, Beyond'.

We tried something "extreme" under many points of whew with FB, we know, such as composition of songs, no standard chorus, extremely rifle-style drums and free poetical lyrics; but that was our thing and it was a must for us to let that work see the light. Our favorite song at moment is still 'My Silent Tomb'.

Who started the band anyway and how/when did the other members join in? Not everyone seems to be active in it any more.

The band has been founded by me and Hellhound, Ogre joined later and now has left the metal scenes I think definitely to join Hard Rock/Blues ambients.

Hexentomb for the moment will be constituted only by me and Hellhound, for other stuff we'll start session collaborations with good friends around here...

Did local bands play a role in the process of starting this band or what has the initial moment for launching this black metal band been? Was there a certain type of music you wanted to play? A certain concept you wanted to express?



Naturally local entities such small town bands, metal bands "dude-based" I would say, play an important role in shaping the tastes, abilities and everything that is the natural growth of a "musician", I had many bands and not all of them were BM, but if I can tell something about local bands is that things in most cases go very bad, because trusting a project and having faith in the thing you're doing are two things completely different.

So I decided to do the thing that was necessary for me at time (still at moment eheheh), black metal but not intended as its unmoving standard, played from the most of bands just like a caricature, the ones that do that with the right intention and mind are very few but this is obvious I think...

Our BM must contain a dose of experimental ideas, it is the final filter in which passes everything we can imagine, slow riffs , fast riffs and so on..

Compared with your early days, how has your music changed since? Has there been a shift in the concept and the way you approach things?

For technical reasons (of production most of them) we don't have yet things play as we would want, for the composition instead we have the same approach, Hexentomb's songs must be powerful with atmospheres well centered on the lyrics and the rest is what our lunacy declares in the moment we read together texts. In other words we don't have changed our way to compose but at moment we still don't hear our music as it should play.

How did you record your early music and how are you able to do this today?

We recorded 'Far Beyond' with an old 2001 laptop, cranked amps and different houses and rooms; that was really Hell! Today I had the possibility to set up a little studio/rehearsal room and here we plan to start the new production of the next full-length that at moment has the title 'Speculum Lunae Cruore Manat'.

What are the core essences of your music? If you would have to narrow it down, then how would you describe your art succinctly?

The essences you say, well the first probably is the very fact that essences exist, and the will to find one makes me play BM, other spices are solitude, the line existing between what is "sane" and what is "insane", and absolutely the Night as mental and temporal states of being. As we see the thing, a process of "Ending" have just begun so we speak about it in many forms.

(Recent) Satyricon or similar black metal with a similar sterile atmosphere seemed to have played an important role in terms of your debut album. Do you have a certain fancy for this type of music or came this sound rather naturally/unintentionally?

We like early and last Satyricon as much, but at the time of FB we were massively listening to Nemesis Divina and Dark Medieval Times and never at that time to Rebel Extravaganza or Volcano(containing black lava that is a wonderful song to me), so for the atmospheres I can say only that we have done the things as we organized them, if some tributes are splashed inside FB are only to old-skool BM just contextualized in a weird frame.

It struck me as quite curious that your debut release 'Far Beyond' came professionally printed; CD as well as booklet. Why did you never consider to start with a demo and wait for the reaction of the black metal folks? Was this not a bit risky?

As I said before printing that release was essentially our priority to get concrete 2 years of work, we don't care what local BM folks think of our band but if I'm not wrong opinions are quite positive anyway.

We know that CD selling is a dead spot, we bring them at metal parties and leave 3-4 of them on tables or toilets, we like the idea that if you enter completely drunk in a toilet to have a piss you could find a professionally printed BM cd waiting for you! Take it and listen or throw it to someone!(Ahahah)

What did you try to express with the title 'Far. Beyond'?

The emblem of the work naturally is "Far, Beyond" because we wanted to go beyond the standard satanic/blind/political frame of (still)today BM, simply we know that these concepts can't be eradicated (and probably they should not) from the musical genre, so we decided to make something that could light a darker way, made not of spirits and presences and magic, but made of blind energies with no conflict between them, but a wheel spinning near an hourglass.

The atmosphere of this work should communicate distance from a sort of hypothetical "normal" perception of the world, living in a world made of shadows and conspiracies, negative feelings and negative energies accumulating around an individual that could be me or you or someone else, and when everything comes to its climax then we see different consequences expressed, often, in various manifestations of violence; in FB we hear a gunshot, which could be the end or the beginning (again) from "I come to join this dark side".

You can read our concept in 4-5 different manners or points of view speaking of the same thing: what makes a man, a man in the world? Probably his cruelty....

Each of the tracks has one aspect in common: the general absence of a chorus in the lyrics. When you take a look at them, the listener might be stroked by the concept-like approach used. Why do you avoid repetition? Does your latest output 'Folgore Notturna' follow in this order as well?

Well if an eventual listener would be stroked by this kind of composition, I hope he'll be positively stroked, other way at moment we don't want to radically change this approach we have with concept-based albums.

We avoid repetition because we like the suite-like progression, in order to create a landscape of scenes which must be more related with real life situations/images, we think that repetition is obviously very useful in the augmentation of general musicality but avoiding this sometimes we think is useful in achieving the augmentation of realism and progressions.

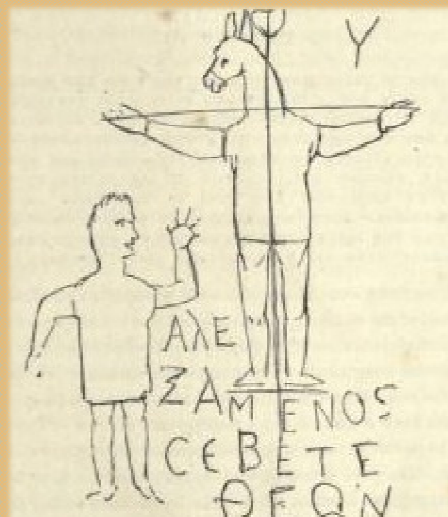
Folgore Notturna presents a lesser quantity of this aspect(see The seed of Madness and Ov Blindness) essentially because we don't want to compose in only one way and also because we like to hear and play 'standard' songs.

When it comes to the rhythm and how texts and music fit together, then of what importance is this unity to you? Do you focus on the music when you write them or is it the other way around? Or do you not care about this?

Also in this we proceeded in different ways: in FB me and Hellhound decided to let the vocals flow across the music very freely, with a sort of old BM mood, rageful and a massively underlined "naif" approach. In Folgore we decided to standardize vocals due to the fact that keeping it still 'free' would not positively match with the rest more squared and controlled.

Black Metal with free style poetry ... do think this could work?

I don't mind if this works or not, this works fine for us, we like the flow of images which comes from the free style, I'm agree that for sure the ending result is less poetical that rhyme-based lyrics but I'm not a poet, I like the transposition of images in words and free style lyrics have for me a more powerful visionary charge.



How would you describe the content of your lyrics? Why does the Lovecraftian mythology make an appearance as well? What is your general idea behind writing these and what do you try to express through them? In terms of the content, what are the differences between Hexentomb's approach and the standard black metal formula?

The contents are various, for sure the feeling to perceive yourself exiled in your country, rage for the mass blindness, and the certainty that when things change they always get worst.

The Lovecraftian mythos for the most are used to express Lovecraft's concept of Cosmic Horror, in which humans are the last ring of an infinite chain of domination and sorrow. I love this non-human-centered point of view.

For the rest I cannot negate the indubitable esthetical value of cosmic horrors which fits flawless into extreme metal atmospheres.

Obviously as stated before Hexentomb's formula is different from others because we don't get fossilized on canons or traditional images, today to be a satanist is only the illusion to be against something, when everyone should consider the entire game of christianity that survives also thanks to its 'bad-guys'...there will be no victory until the entire cult will be eradicated! ahahahahah

Do you use books as a source of inspiration? If so, what would these be?

I use everything as source of inspiration, books is a part, literature books first of all but also films, photos, internet, everything that states the cruelty of this world.

In 2010 your second release, the EP Folgore Notturna, has seen the light of day. What are the differences between this recent output and your debut?

Differences lie as I told you before first of all in the composition, less free and more centered on metal standards, lyrics start speaking of emargination and solitude and go on hyperbolically towards the gates of drunkenness and madness, until getting the entrance into a world of revelations and horrors and back in the real world populated by billions of blind people perceived that their 'normality farm' will keep them safe from the horrors of the world.

Why did you pick an Italian title and would you mind providing a translation? Interestingly enough, all of the track titles are in English?

The Italian title has been chosen essentially because the term folgore which means thunderbolt, cannot be correctly translated in english with the word thunderbolt, it posses other shades of meaning that cannot be expressed in a translation. One of the shades is the sense of sudden illumination of mind.

The track titles are all in english exept made for media res taken from the latin expression in media res which means 'mildly', I deleted the particle 'in' because I intended the song itself the object of 'the mild way'.

Do you consider using your own tongue instead of the lingua franca for your lyrics? What are the benefits of using this wide-spread language?

Well the answer lies in the question don't you?The benefits of using a wide-spread language are that this language is wide-spread, and at moment I'm convinced that people outside my country can understand better the things I have to say. Only this.

For the new release probably there will be a pair of songs with an italian lyric, but I'm not sure. Although in the future I would add more native language scripts...I do what the Moon tells me to do!ahahahahah

When I listened to this release, the actual way the music appeared – first a metal track, then an ambient one and then one with which the album would be unleashed – struck me as a bit unconvincing. Heritage's Edge, the opener, sounds displaced and unable to provide something meaningful, so why did you place it there and what were your reasons for this concept?

Heritage's edge is the opener of the entire work so it has to be intended as an intro nothing more nothing less. Probably you feel it a little bit displaced due to some guitar arrangements I don't know.

Later, another ambient interlude appears. Does a consistent atmosphere not seem to be an important issue or why do you like to disrupt it now and then?

Some atmospheres get disrupted due to he fact that is a concept dedicated to madness, so the atmosphere should be more fragmented. Probably you'll like next work, which one of the core points will be the density of atmosphere.

How important are cover artworks for you? The debut come with a rather artsy one, while the recent Folgore Notturna reminds with its monochromatic style rather on the old-school black metal branch. Could you elaborate on your use of photography and drawings on your art a bit?

Cover artworks are very important for us because(when you get an original cd..)is the place where the music lies, the booklet itself tells a story of the entire work and the cover has the duty to bring all of this to the eye of listeners, in substance the cover should tell the entire album with images.

For sure we'll do.

As it had been released in an edition of one-hundred copies, it seems natural to ask whether you plan to do another and maybe even larger one in the future. Why did you pick the label 'The Dread Lair' in the first place?

For the next full-length we're already working we have finished one song and bass and drums tracks of other 8 songs.

We picked The Dread because the guy seems to be really ok, and kept interested in our project, from Europe we didn't receive interesting deals.

When it comes to the recording of the music, then where did you begin in your early days and how has this changed over the course of the years? Were you able to use a professional studio of some sort?

When I began to play home recording was a dream, I recorded two demos when I was 16 and 17. it was about 2000 or 2001 we spent a lot of money, the guy behind the mixer was not able to manipulate metal recordings and many metalheads or musicians in the south of Italy suffered from this technical plague. Nowadays home recordings give more freedom to musicians but create a horrible tide of sound massification, no more personality in the recordings ectetc.

We use the drum computer ok I know but it's our standard bearer a sort of mark of the machine, in an ironical way I could tell that we underline the massification of production using standard technologies while using non standard sounds in no standard songs eheheh.

Is there a chance to hear your music without a drum-computer? Especially the programming – high speed double bass attacks – are a bit odd, at least from my perspective, as they add a strange unnatural touch to the music.

The day there will be the chance to hear our music without a drum computer you'll hear ahahahahaah. At moment we don't want to leave it. Hexentomb is a creature heavily attached to computers and machines, is a non-human-based musical project it's an artificial life.

Would you mind sharing with the readers how the responses on your releases have been so far?

Leaving the fact that Italian bands must work with double forces for being awarded as central/north-europe bands, we're having good reviews and good opinions and also from The Dread Lair we're having good news, it seems that Texas likes Hexentomb and we're very happy of this!

Is there actually a chance to see you hit the stage at some point or is Hexentomb a studio-band only?

At moment we don't want to perform live acts because the day we intend to do a similar thing we can't perform a standard apparition, we're studying something weird as you should know by this time.

We're not a studio-band we play in Hexentomb because we MUST play this!

If people like our outputs we're happy, but we don't do songs for being an Internet existing phenomenon or for being cool with friends.

This is a do or die thing!

With what kind of music did you grow up and when did you get in touch with metal for the first time? In terms of the development of the metal scene, then what is your opinion on it? Are you able to enjoy modern bands as well or do you have a focus on the early days of the scene?

The first time I heard about metal I was 11 and a family friend gave me for present Manowar's Battle Hymns I was not so much impressed and when took to me to buy my first cd I got Alan Parson's Tales of Mystery and Imagination Edgar Allan Poe. That thing was amazing! one of the best cds I've ever had. Then at 14 I stole from a cds shop a copy of South Of Heaven, there it was all the world of metal for me. At 15 I began to play the bass and then arrived with internet and piracy the possibility to get every kind of music and then grew up in me the morbid fascination for extreme metal, occult and so on. Although I have very little sympathy for death and brutal metal.

I don't know where the metal scene (intended not as underground scene I suppose) will bring us and the metal itself, I think there are a lot of good productions in the latter years, I don't listen to many of them, in fact I didn't listen to the 2 last Burzum's outputs (I don't care about) and so on, mainstream is heavily contaminated with CORE elements, black and death metal are no more separate(and probably also Hexentomb gave an hand in these terms...), today productions sound very similar, triggered drums everywhere. In few words I think the essence of metal is slowly degrading, there's no more Push towards having an attitude to genres. Music is still there, but something is fading away.

I don't know if my comment can be useful but I'm listening at maximum albums that arrive to 1996(there are in this year albums from pantera, slayer, emperor, sepultura and many more), a true metal year ahahahah.

Can you write a bit about your local music scene? Are there regular metal concerts where you live?

Italy is developing in the latter 10 years a good attention to metal music, here in the South things are a little bit harder, because there are many factors to be considered..But coming to us, yes metal concerts are regular, an average value could be once a week in Bari.

Is there any chance to see some new art spread from you any time soon?

Yess! You have to wait just a little bit, we completed some bass and drums tracks, we have to arrange guitars (and find a session), I think for early 2012 you'll be able to hear 'Speculum Lunae Cruore Manat'.

How can someone acquire one of your releases? What about contact addresses? How can folks reach out to you?

At moment if someone is interested in supporting us, can buy some copies of 'Folgore Notturna' directly from The Dread Lair's site, if the site is down or something similar contact us at hexentomb@gmail.com.

Contact us to this mail also if you're interested in getting a copy of our debut 'Far Beyond'.

I'm very sorry to tell this but you can find us also on Facebook.(I know this thing sucks...)

Some final comments, thoughts, rants ...

Support Metal, use "piracy" with rational sense, buy underground releases and download mainstream's! Drink a lot of beer, if you like smoke some pot and read as many books as you can...

Hails Caròndimonio.



In Loving Memory

Hey there... how are times in Indonesia?

ILM – we are fine.

When and by whom had 'In Loving Memory' been founded? Were these musicians involved in other bands before? In terms of the music, did you always wanted to play Gothic Metal? Why did you pick this genre?

ILM – ILM was founded by I myself Ashadur Roffek as the male vocal, actually, in ILM, each member has a band himself, but we have already had the same taste in this gothic band, ILM. We play about the feeling which is consistent with what we want to play and not out of the gothic metal line rules and of course because we love gothic and this genre.

Is it easy to find musicians, who are interested in this kind of music in Indonesia? What status does (Gothic) metal have in the musical culture? Can someone hear it on the radio or watch it on television?

ILM – maybe it is quite difficult to find a musician, especially for soprano vocal in Indonesia, no, of course they can through the metal station radio which is 70% of metal radio station is playing only metal genre.

What kind of bands influenced you when you started your band? Had there been a certain kind of music you wanted to play or a band that had an impact on you?

ILM – I myself especially In Loving Memory much have been more influenced by music of King Diamond, Amorphis and of course Theatre of Tragedy.

Did you learn the instruments by yourself or did you have professional teachings at some point?

ILM – all the members of ILM learn the instrument with we ourselves, we never learn with professional teacher or follow the course.

Why don't you write a bit about your releases:

"With the Devil Instrument" 1999 Demo
rehearsal album studio which contain of two songs
- With the devil instrument
- Asa yang terlerai
(Self release)

"And Her Whisper" 2001 Demo
rehearsal studio which contains of two songs
- And her whisper
- My beloved memory
(Self release)

"Aku Adalah Pemimpi" 2003/2004 Tape
Album demo, contain of seven songs
- With the devil instrumet
- Asa yang terlerai
- And her whisper
- My beloved memory
- Silent
- Permadaniku
- Aku adalah pemimpi
(Inviolabel musik)

There are still some compilation albums which can't be told here.

What kind of music did you play on these, how many copies have been distributed and how have the responses been? It is really hard to find information on these. Are any releases missing in this list; except for compilations and your new one of course? Were you able to sell them to fans outside of Indonesia or South-East Asia as well?

ILM – until now, we are still in the same concept, about how many copies have been distributed, you can ask to our label because it has only been copied in 1000 copies. No releases are missing except some of the compilation album which we have followed, but we do not include it in the latest information. Maybe all of these can be asked to our label.

Actually, how difficult is it to release and spread metal music in Indonesia? In case someone wants to travel there, can it be found on local stores or on the market?

ILM - actually it is not difficult if we want to work harder, because we and our label concern our music in Jogjakarta, central Java.

Your latest release would be 'In Silent Oscillation'. How did it take you to get it done? Have there been any difficulties in getting it released or recorded? Are you satisfied with the result?

ILM – yes, there are some difficulties when we handle to release this mini CD album. It comes from the problem in each member, so we must handle our schedule, we always try to write and refresh the songs until but it makes our times waste only because of it. Of course we are very satisfied because there has already a female vocal which brings new character in In Loving Memory and the result is good enough,

How would you describe the music on it? What are its core essences?

ILM – if we compare our new mini CD with our demo album "Aku adalah Pemimpi", it is much better, because we recorded professionally, and this mini CD I think it makes our genre look clearly if it is gothic doom, but I don't know if you have another view because you have already had the sampler.

Why did you pick this title and what do you want to express through it?

ILM – I think it is suitable because the theme about romantics hehehehe:D. Actually this is about personal experience in a real life. And most of the lyrics I write by myself and I spill what my feeling, especially the lyrics of Silent Oscillation song. hhehehehe



Judging from the titles you use English as well as Indonesian for the lyrics. Is there a difference in expressing your thoughts and ideas in these languages? Does metal – or music in general – sung in Indonesian have a special touch and atmosphere?

ILM – maybe we find the difficulties when we sang in our own language. But when we felt comfortable to use English, then we use it. But actually there is no difference to express it, because we have understood both of languages. If we talk about the atmosphere or touching, we prefer to use Indonesian language because it is easier to be understood for the audiences, because they more understand and can feel the real meaning of the song which we sing.

What do your lyrics generally deal with?

ILM – All the lyrics have relation with the nature and all of the things which is in it.

Did you ever play live so far? How large has or have the audience(s) been? What kind of metal fans attend your concerts?

ILM – of course we did. We ever performed, and there are more than 500-1000 audience. And not only gothic lovers who come, but all of the kind of underground fans had come.

You also have metal festivals in Indonesia, right? Would you mind writing a bit on this?

ILM – hahahaha...that is past story, Ludah Event Organizer has been built before Ludah Production existed in 2005. It have been exist almost 5 years and it have shown a lot of event which is held on Gresik city in East Java, Indonesia. The most unforgettable events are GRESIK METAL FEST 1 until 4 because the tickets always sold out. Maybe if there is a chance, I will hold an event GRESIK METAL FEST PART 5. Just give me support bro.

Is there any chance to hear your old music as well? Do you think about re-releasing or maybe even re-recording them?

ILM – Of course yes, emmmm, maybe if we have been given a chance to rerelease, we will refuse, but if we have given a chance to record again, we will corporate.

Do you have some plans for new releases already? Do you plan to play live any time soon?

ILM – emmmmm.. Until now we still wait for the Mini CD "" of course we still discuss about whether we will be a studio band or we will make live perform. But we'll try to do the best for fans and the listener of our music.

What releases are available right now? How can they be bought?

ILM – All of the stuff like CD, patches or shirt can be bought through our label, and we still look for the label to release Mini CD for Europe Marketing.

How can people contact you? What Internet sites do you have?

ILM – You can visit on our official my space or our label:

<http://www.myspace.com/inlovingmemoryoffical>

<http://www.ludahproduction.com/>

A few closing words if you like...

ILM – Thank you so much for the time to interview with us, we're so proud of all of this. Hope we can be much better and better to create music and also you, we hope the best.

<http://www.myspace.com/inlovingmemoryoffical>



Reviews

rngmnn

Ronny Engmann – this is explanation behind the acronym ‘rngmnn’ – is a Berlin, Germany, based artist, whose music is discussed in certain limits below.

<http://rngmnn.1mhz.org/>, <http://1798.1mhz.org/>, <http://rengmann.com/>

Strvnýe

(Dark Ambient, Noise)

4 Tracks (MP3 – Netlabel: 1798) - _ _ - (17:13)

Minimalist, dark and haunting. The basic elements of rngmnn's art can be found on the band's first recording in a certain kind of variety. In the background there tends to be some sort of (drone) texture, while the front some (repetitive) noise elements create some sort of diversion. An astounding aspect is the generally shortness of the compositions. Other bands have explored similar arrangements over a much longer length and repeating/elaborated the motives to a larger amount. rngmnn did nothing of the sort ...

The first and the third track are quite reduced and offer only a small set of sounds, while the other two have the setting laid out above. Despite the shortness, the absence of a real innovative approach and the minimalist setting, Strvnýe might still be interesting to those who have a fancy for dark and ‘simple’ art.

Skogsrået

(Dark Ambient)

4 Tracks (MP3 – Netlabel: 1798) - _ _ - (14:26)

The title of this release is somewhat amusing; especially once the music is put into consideration. Skogsrået (Huldra) is a forest creature, which appears in the Scandinavian mythology and is described as being of a rather beautiful person; even if the clothing is rather common. Furthermore, s(he) is attributed with a certain amount of seductiveness and, depending on the region the legends, also with possessing a tail.

It is hard to put this aspect into consideration with the music – no, a reference to Homer and the sirens seems a bit too daring –, because the basic elements had been written on above already. Yet, compared with the first output – whose tracks had been recorded/composed – over a stretch of several years, this one sounds a bit more focussed and consists of less random elements. When you listen to the tracks, then the structure reveals itself more easily. It is also necessary to emphasize the minimalism of the concept, which has increased slightly.

To sum everything up:

The music on these two releases are dark ambient of a surprisingly short, but still interesting nature. Noise elements make an appearance, but rather on the first than on the second one.

San Miniato – San Miniato

(Italy (?); Field Recordings, Experimental, Noise)

1 Track (Tape – DNA Collective) - _ _ - (24:20)

<http://dnanetlabel.altervista.org/>

Use Google. Enter the term “San Miniato”. The most obvious reference is an Italian town and a glance in the booklet of the tape reveals that this one is actually correct. Even though music can be found on both sides, it is actually the same track.

On three consecutive days in 2010, some sounds had been recorded in the aforementioned city and these were used for this recording. Field-recordings, such appear on this tape, but it is strange to listen to the entire ‘performance’. Compared with other ones that made their way on my player, the one by ‘San Miniato’ emphasizes dissonance over a clear and identifiable aspect of the real world, which the listener identify ... in certain boundaries. Here, noises and disruptions combined with a rather distant background volume make it hard to really take this step. Voices, the sound of animals and such can be identified, but as these are only a small fraction of the entire performance, while the rest remains distant, it is hard to grab the attention of the listener.



As there is no additional ambient or drone texture in the background, nothing but the sounds exists as a guiding line. Therefore, once some silence takes over, only the vague memory of the cassette remains, while the noises work as a counterpoint to it. With a proper idea that is easier to grasp such might turn out to be a good idea, but in terms of San Miniato's work, such is actually not the case. Furthermore, the differences in the level of volume makes it tough to appreciate the art; now nearly silent and impossible to understand, then loud and noisy. It is not bad ... just not my cup of tea.

Wäldchengarten – Bottom Feeder

(Denmark; Noise, Drone)

1 Track (3" CDr – Dokuro) - _ _ - (19:36)

<http://www.dokuro.it/>, <http://www.waldchengarten.dk/>

The band name has its origins in the German language and I have never ever heard this word before. Actually, it is a combination of two different phrases Wäldchen and Garten. The former refers to a small wood – something like a copse –, while the second translates to ‘garden’. When you take a closer look at this amalgamation, then something interesting reveals itself: while a wood wakes the association of a chaotic mess in which nature grows in all its wildest forms, the impression of a garden is rather a strict as well as controlled environment, in which even the grass is not allowed as it wants. Therefore, this name contains both structural elements: chaos and order. Furthermore, when you take a look at the title of the release, then you can continue with this play even more. But enough of this.

Bottom Feeder is a 3" CDr spread by the Italian label Dokuro, whose outputs have been covered in this magazine a bit already. The inlay reveals some scarce pieces of information, which is somewhat interesting in terms of the setting: this one track, there are no more on this album, had been recorded with a vast set of instruments in the year 2009. It should not surprise then, to experience quite an astounding array of sounds and atmospheres over the entire length. The chaos and order referred to above, reveals itself in a variety of manifestations.

Gentle opens the track and some rather calm melody – some vaguely discernable keyboard – sets the first mood and pace. It does not take long for the first noise elements – drone texture and samples – to appear and to move the music into the realm of the dark ambient. Generally, the elements do not give the impression of hast or the need to progress with a certain urge or need. Everything appears sedated in some respect and even though some eruption-like switches do occur, the steadiness in which the ideas remains the one factor to shape the play of the different as well as contrasting elements.

'Bottom Feeder' does not give the impression of moving towards a certain core. Despite the general tendency to progress towards an increase in noisiness and intensity, it seems too far-fetched to point to one passage as explaining or reflecting the general idea, Wäldchengarten had while composing/crafting this album. While at some point a kind of melody appears, others are less granting and take the listener deep into a sphere of multiple layers of music; drone meets noise.

'Bottom Feeder' moves through various stages – calm/acoustic guitar driven ones; distorted guitars; drone/dark ambient; a bit of harsh noise – and arrangements of ambient, noise and drone. Never too offensive or intense, it remains on a somewhat steady but not predictable 'way'. Various guitars and keyboards as well as other equipment make an appearance. Some percussion elements as a contrast would have been neat, but the overall performance is quite interesting and has its moments ... but I cannot say that I enjoy the track in its totality. It is simply a bit too bland and predictable at times.

Wser – Again (Part 3)

(???; Experimental, Electronics)

1 Track (CD – Noise Park Activities) -_-_- (29:33)

<http://noiseparkactivities.blogspot.com/>

I wonder how the other parts sound. I wonder whether it would motivate me to scream aloud: AGAIN! Is it Kafka, is it Poe? The title is rather suggestive as well as obscure at the same time; even more so when the music is being taken into the consideration. Those who do not have a chance to try this CD might be surprised about this.

In case of this piece of art, the expression 'nomen est omen' applies in a neat as well as odd sense. Yes, it should really be taken literally. Despite the length of nearly thirty minutes, the overall amount of ideas and concept is actually rather low or to be more precise, exceedingly minimalist. There is a somewhat constant motive in the background, remains there until the end and appears on in slight variations – level of volume and play with the tones. Again and again and again and again and again ... and again ... yes again ... surely ... again ... and so on and so forth. Some additional tones appear, but this one idea remains as a persistent inerasable aspect of the performance.

In terms of the sound, the style reminds a bit on a computer or some electronic calculating device from a cheap movie or some old pc game. There is no bass; there is just this endless line of tones, which appear constant with some small interruptions. For some inexplicable reason, it is quite fascinating to take this trip and to experience the play with the motive. There is no need to be too attentive or focussed, because the shiftiness is on a rather small level, which leaves enough room for other things.

Again ... maybe it is worth to track down the other parts as well, because then I can to them again.



Mowlawner – The Butcher and the Unwary (2011)

(???, Noise, Experimental, Ambient)

1 Track (Tape – Devotional Hymns Records) - _ _ - (15:00)

<http://www.devotionalhymns.com/>

I suspected Mowlawner to be a side-project. I suspected it to be another adventure of Mories, the brain behind projects like 'Gnaw Their Tongues' and 'De Magia Veterum'. After a search in the Internet revealed something different. Eric, whoever he might be, is behind this band, while Mories released it through his label 'Devotional Hymns Records'.

Anyway, the tape opens and ends with some sort of screams by a woman – hard to say whether this is true lust or as a result of torture/torment. In both instances, the length is rather kept short; in fact, considering the total length of fifteen minutes, it is almost negligible. You might even go so far and ask what point it has anyway, because the samples is just there and as the rest of the track is rather some drone/ambient/noise thing without any further, it gives the impression of being displaced.

Aside from this, the music is a bland of various influences and the main ones had been mentioned above but it would not hurt to add Industrial to it. The sound presented in the track is an amalgam of dense layers of sounds and styles, which have a noisy touch but without being offensive or even harsh. In some respect the style of the music sounds like Gnaw Their Tongues art, bereft of all the offensive and intense moments; which resulted in a sedated meandering through realms of murkiness. Strange facets, noise and whatnot intrude upon the listener, but it is rather like a guided tour in a save bus than a real adventure on foot. Therefore, the whole experience is rather shallow and leaves not much behind.



Betraytor – Rehearsecutions 2009-2010

(Israel; Thrash Metal)

4 Tracks (Tape – Israhellbanger) - _ _ - (16:54)

<http://www.israhellbanger.com/>, <http://www.myspace.com/betraytorband>

'Attacks from the rehearsal room', this is the appropriate title for this demo output. Diy-underground-Xerox-shit from the depths of the Israeli metal scene and nothing else makes up the second release of Betraytor.

Violent, fast, aggressive, merciless ... thrash metal. Whether it is good or not is hard to say, because the sound of the music is quite raw and unbalanced, this resulted in the vocals to drown a considerable amount of the instruments. Rehearsecutions 2009-2010 would be better would the listener actually be able to listen to something aside from the vocals or the drums; example: the solo in 'Thrash Assault' is drowned to a considerable degree.

How does this band sound? Well, take the Mexican band Strikemaster – their debut – and you get a good impression of what is going on here, but it should be noted that the Israelis are faster; another references would be the German Deathrow. A definite opinion on this tape is a tricky thing, due to aspects referred to above. A better production would increase the quality of the performance immensely and make it much more accessible. Currently, maniacs of underground music might want to give this band a try ...

Ithaca Trio – Clarity

(United Kingdom; Minimalist Drone, Ambient)

1 Track (1 Track – MP3: self-released) - _ _ _ (19:05)

<http://ithacatrio.co.uk/>, <http://ithacatrio.bandcamp.com/>

Don't make a sound!

Don't make a hiss!

Keep your breath!

O'wise you miss

A gentle sound, so

Calm, nice, low

Through the air

Hovers and floa'

Hark, a string

A piano tunes in

A texture as well

A silent hell

Sshh, don't you move!

Sshh, don't you speak!

Sshh, it's clarity

...

But some say insanity

Cities Last Broadcast – The Cancelled Earth

(Canada; Dark Ambient)

7 Tracks (CD – Cyclic Law) - _ _ _ (47:60)

<http://www.cycliclawn.com/21stcycle.html>, <http://www.myspace.com/citieslastbroadcast>

When you think about field-recordings, then you might imagine them to be some sort of re-arranging of reality, a slight twist on how this are outside but portrayed through the lense of the artist ... or the composer. For the listener a small glimpse into a another world or scenery is presented and with the help of one's fantasy such can be explored to a certain degree; i.e. to the let the thoughts as well as the mind drift. By searching through the vast spheres of this type of art, the interested person will generally stumble over a rather conservative approach, whose concept is to present these new impression in a rather direct and undistorted manner. Be it the play of children on a field or the sound of water in a small stream, it is easy to identify these as such and those additional textures will be recognized as a pleasing and appropriate support for the focal points of the music.

Cities Last Broadcast are somewhat different.

The cover, or to be more precise, the design of the release sets the mood for the things to come quite neatly. This brownish, abandoned and somehow lifeless depiction of a street opening, this post-human scenery, already gives an idea on how the music on this CD will sound. It is not so much a 'Silent Hill' like setting, but a similarity can be pointed towards: from the mere looks the scenery seems to drown in a wall of dust and sand. Imagine a Mad Max film put into a larger town, while a desert storm fills every opening or holes with grains of the tiniest shape and form.

Such is the scenery and such is the music.

Those seven tracks provide a glimpse into a strange desolate world, whose facets seem to have been reduced to a small amount, while droning sounds linger through the air. They fill it and their dark haunting touch make it easy to imagine the pictures to it. Abandoned streets, houses and even cities. Corpses lie around, dogs roam the places and they might even feast on some rotten pieces of flesh. Vague impressions of the remainders of man's existence try to penetrate the deep and overarching layers, but are generally unable to do so. Glimpses, small shots of light, disturb the dark sphere in which the music drowns, but are lost in it all too soon, as the monotonous and ever-ongoing drone-sounds

As laid out above, the general concept here is the movie inside one's head rather than something that attempts to support field-recordings on one way or another. Due to the density and the reduced complexity of the concept, the listener will be able to experience the performance rather through an intense focussing on the music – two examples: the voices in 'Bascule Bridge' and in 'Railroom' –, while a mere use as a background ambience, would not create such a deep and lasting experience. Pär Boström, he would be the sole person behind CLB and he is well-known for this project Kammarheit, generally relied on a slow build-up of the atmosphere, a gentle progression through the scenery and attempts to unfold the concept through this steadiness. Surprising sounds and elements do appear and make up a crucial part of the idea behind this band, but the listener feels rather guided through the different places of this 'other world'.

There is one exception though: Architecton.

Being the last track it does not only give the impression of releasing the listener back to a different and more complex sphere, but as if the intense sound used for this track are actually waves, whose purpose is to wash the bad thoughts and memories away. It is a cleansing of all the dirt and dust through which the listener had to dig him/herself over the course of the album. Furthermore, the reappearance of this 'wave-motive' adds to 'Architecton' a certain kind of catchiness, which in this degree was unprecedented on TCE. Actually, this comes with a backlash. It simply does not fit into the rest of the program. In fact, to remove this last composition from the album does not give the impression it would do much harm to the overall concept. All preceding music fits together in a neat and consistent way, while the last one, despite all the nice and charming touch, stands out ... and by no means in a positive way. Maybe a different spot on the record would change the perception a bit, but the difference towards the dominant style seems to large to bridge this gap in a convincing way.



Therefore, similar to other albums, also this one closes with a slight disturbing aspect. The one composition, whose potential is highest in terms of catchiness, is actually unable to provide something meaningful. A counterpoint is set, but at a stage in which its impact fulminates and leaves therefore nothing. In case someone has this release on 'rotation', 'Architecton' might even be perceived as a stain, which does not merge with the other compositions. The final judgement on this output is therefore, that a lack in consistency and coherence towards the end, leaves a slightly bitter taste and confusion. Nevertheless, 'The Cancelled Earth' is still of a high quality and able to fascinate through dense and dark layers, which create in the front of the eye of the listener the impression of a desolate and abandoned (post-human?) scenery.

Gruel – Gruel (2005)

(Sweden; Death Metal)

3 Tracks (Tape – Raging Black Records) - _ _ - (11:42)

<http://www.angelfire.com/music6/gargamyrk/home.html>

Don't be surprised, this band is as unknown as it is mysterious. Band members are listed in the inlay and their label seems to have bit the dust since. A tape, three tracks ... and nothing more. Astoundingly, a review appears on the Metal Archives and it praises Gruel considerably; a 100 point score only points in such direction. Is this obscure piece of old-school death metal really a shiny little gem that has remained unrecognized on a broader scale so far? Let us see.

As mentioned before, 'Gruel' do not play modern music, even though the production of their art is. The music comes generally with a lot of power and the whole set of elements merges together quite nicely. Therefore, at least some amount of professionalism shines through the dense mist of obscurity.

To describe the performance as 'consistent' – in the sense of a narrow and coherent approach – would reduce the music on this tape to an unnecessary degree. There are breaks, there are longer guitar passages, various types of vocals, blast parts and solos. Each of these appear more or less in every of the three compositions. Some name dropping: 'Bolt Thrower' (less complex and faster with a different emphasis), 'Grave' (without the keyboards) and add some other bands from the Swedish old-school death metal scene like 'Nihilist'... to get an impression. 'Gruel' are heavy but avoid becoming too much of cliché in terms of the music. They like to take back the dynamics in the music and venture into slower realms again and again. Yet, while this works quite well in 'Awaiting the Massacre', the opener 'Corporeal Flesh Consume' is less convincing. The energy is simply unable to unfold itself and remains stuck at a certain level ... which sounds artificial. Anyway, as the band was able to present a better performance in the last track, the listener is left with two good pieces and one rather dull one.

Whoever did this demo had some skill; not only in composing death metal but also in getting the sound done right. This is too professional for a young band that spread their first release on a small level in low amount of copies. One question remains then: what is the story behind this tape?

In the meantime, it is recommended to you, because it is actually quite good and well crafted.



Hands I Annul Yours (2011 – to be released soon)

(USA; Sludge, Doom Metal)

2 Tracks (Tape – Mayor Destroyer Records)

<http://www.majordestroyer.com/>, <http://soundcloud.com/major-destroyer-records>

Do you know the good ol' days when you got a fresh new tape, put it into your walk-man and enjoyed it while going shopping, driving to friends and whatnot? Not only have MP3s taken away something of the fascination of these analogue artefacts, also some tapes have a slightly strange conception today: a rather short length. The cake in this respect might take the Montenigrin black metal band Bogalj, whose tape had the masterful length of 3:58 (three tracks!); another example would be the Chilean band Communion, who thought that 7:39 might be more than enough for this kind of format, while 'Hands I Annul Yours' distributes ten minutes over two sides and one track on each of it. The level of inconvenience is pretty striking and to listen to the tape in a walk-man seems to require a certain amount of endurance on the side of the listener, considering how many times the side will have to be changed.

Well, this would be the first demo of the American band Hands I Annul Yours. In case you cannot find the band in the Internetz, do not be surprised, this is some real underground shite. Two

times five minutes and two times no vocals; except for some samples of course. While listening to the music you do not feel that a voice is missing. Sludgy and with a good amount of flow, such is the music perceived and the art reminds on 'Billy Crystal Meth' but played slower; another reference might be 'Comparative Anatomy'. The overall style is quite minimalist and intense at the same time.

Humans Fuck Off – Humans Fuck Off (2011)

(Italy; Noise, Experimental, Improvisation)

4 Tracks (Tape – Dokuro) -_-_- (~30 minutes)

<http://www.dokuro.it/>

Yes, humans fuck off! Get the hell outta here and make way for the real audience ... whoever this might be. Maybe some cockroaches will enter the scene, some poisonous spiders or the ever-swarming (as well as ever-present) wood louses. Whether these will be pleased by the confusing arrangements presented on this very recording seems to be an open question though. Judging from the daily experience, the suspicion is as such as to expect a certain preference towards a rotten apple, disoriented insect or heap of organic garbage respectively, while the pesky human way of living is rather endured than actively participated in. Really, ignorance seems to be bliss, indeed. Only a few animals – like cockatoo/parrots and cats/dogs – are able to motivate themselves to not only to join us humans in the creating of music, but also to actually enjoying it. Compared with the vast amount of species on this planet, the total number of these seems to be negligible.

So, if humans fuck off ... who will be there to listen to the music? Is there a chance that some species might actually appreciate the performance by this band? Seeing as the tape contains four tracks of some outré as well as chaotic kind of music, it might be more appealing to their ears than the all too sedative kind of art generally presented on the radio or the airwaves. Maybe something more in vain of the Lovecraftian harmonies will reach out to those who had been left untouched by the human music so far. Yes indeed, chaos and obscure structures or arrangements make up a crucial element of this release. Improvisation, such indicates the short description by the label, in a noisy and 'offensive' fashion appears on this recording.

Yes, indeed, clear music structures do not really appear on this recording. The listener is constantly bombarded with a to and fro of sounds, noises and vague textures. Guitars play a crucial role here as well as electronic equipment, which was used for various purposes. Samples, and this might astound in some respect, make no appearance whatsoever. To actually describe the performance is a bit difficult, due to the constant reshaping of the ideas and motives. Being neither too aggressive – especially compared to 'harsh noise' – and being also not too disharmonic, it is actually an interesting listening experience. Melancholy, sadness and other emotions were expressed in certain levels throughout this release.

When you think about this release in broader terms, then a quote from Marilyn Manson's *Antichrist Superstar* album seems to be appropriate:

Anti people now you've gone too far
Here's your antichrist superstar
(Copyright: Marilyn Manson)

Humans Fuck Off... – by the way, the persons behind this band are Asley Facchin (UnaLuna, Simmetria Distorta) and Michele Scariot (nodolby) – is this to be understood in an ironic kind of way, or in the sense of an imperative that has to (must?) be obeyed? In some sense, the release points towards its impact on the world and especially the de-constructive aspect of the noise genre in general; especially when you take it literally and add to this all the well-known clumsiness of man: after the disassembling, the re-arranging leaves certain aspects/parts out and the person responsible for this wonders where these have originally been taken from. Therefore, this band has one thing to spare: us humans and we can 'fuck off', because we are unable to add something worthy to this new and fascinating sculpture of noise. Even though we might want to listen to it, even though we would like to join in with the party, like the pale spot-covered nerd we have to sit on the worn down couch and feel the embarrassment of being unwelcome.

Hence, let us wait for a new alien master race and present them this kind of art, which we are so unworthy to enjoy.

Dawn the Plague – Dawn the Plague (2006)

(USA; Black Metal)

12 Tracks (CD – Self-released) - _ _ - (57:13)

<http://www.myspace.com/dawntheplague>

The first and only release of the American black metal band 'Dawn the Plague' offers the listener a considerable amount of music. Interestingly, no new music seems to have hit the surface and this debut from the year 2006 remains the sole output by the band so far. Well, this is bad in some respect, because all its shortcomings, this piece of music has its fascination.

First of all, it is possible to listen and enjoy the performance by the Americans. The style of the music does not follow a too conservative and therefore unnecessary limited approach, which resulted in a shallow repetitive mess ... similar to the stuff spread in the underground on a daily basis. No, the current economic downturn will not have a lasting effect, because the situation recovers those bands will be back with a vengeance. Anyway, DtP's music interprets black metal not in a too strict sense. While the vocals are a clear indication, the riffs and



arrangements like to wander off a bit. Sometimes the music is a bit avant-garde, then it is a bit thrashy, then a bit folkly ... just to name some. Judging from the sound, not all tracks seem to have been recorded at the same session; which lead to some variation in terms of the level of dominance of certain aspects of the music.

The tracks are generally melodic, have an emphasis the vocals, whose part is then supported by the guitars, while the drums – a machine – do not exceed the role of a small facet. Keyboards appear as well, but their part does not reach the level of being cheesy and too dominant; they are there and enrich the compositions in a proper way. In terms of the atmosphere memories on the early Dimmu Borgir are awoken, but now with too many vocals and a too repetitive concept. Especially these two aspects are generally an issue one-man-bands have to deal with and DtP are not exception from this.

Therefore, if you, reader, are able to look beyond these shortcomings, then this American band might be something for you to check out.

Arrowwood / Novemthree split CD (2007)

14 Tracks (2x3"CDr – Little Somebody Records) -_-_- (38:23)

It is a strange as it is an interesting release. First, there is the beautiful design and the meticulous way in which it was crafted, then there is the peculiar music which appears on those 2 3" CDRs. Each band plays some sort of folk music, but of a peculiar kind and this elaborated in the part below.



Arrowwood

(USA; Folk, Ambient)

8 Tracks -_-_- (16:58)

<http://www.myspace.com/arrowwood>

The first part of this split album might confuse the listener in some respect. Rather depressive and dark as well as minimalist folk is presented in a surprisingly atmospheric haunting fashion. Arrowwood's characteristic elements is the voice of Chelsea. With her (rather) spoken – sometimes even in an aspirate kind of way – performance she adds a disturbing focal point to the art, which is more or less accompanied by the instruments than vice versa. To be a bit more precise, it is actually not singing and not speaking ... it is something in between. She appears on the part of Novemthree as well – Beneath the Hemlock, Within the Grove – and the choral-like part there adds a nice twist to her previous performance.

Eight tracks make up Arrowwood's part and nearly each of them comes with vocals; even Winged Sirens – less than one minute in length – has them. Overall, the compositions are generally rather short and linear in their approach. Not many complex arrangements can be found here and it is rather the atmosphere that has to be cited as an outstanding characteristic. A voice with some ambient/folk in the background. A charming duet ... in some respect and certain limits. And this works ... and you will enjoy it, if you have a fancy for this type of music. The peculiar nature of this concept has to be stressed indeed.

Novemthree

6 Tracks - _ - _ (21:25)

<http://www.novemthree.com/>, <http://www.myspace.com/novemthree>

Second band, second style. There is a huge difference between these two. Not only the arrangements, also the atmosphere have a swifter and somewhat lighter touch. Furthermore, as the compositions are generally longer (2:16 – 5:50 compared to 0:57 – 3:30), Novemthree presents the music more balanced out and with a deeper sense of exploring the melodies. Hence, and this can especially be felt in the last track 'Vespers', the listening experience is deeper as it is sombre. Unlike in the performance of Arrowwood, the aspect of vocals only play a minor and maybe even negligible role. 'To Breathe in the Trees' has some, but there the voice is rather some sort of whisper and hardly any phrase, word or the like is expressed with much vigour. Again, the aspect of creating a dense atmosphere seems to be a crucial element of the band's performance, but it is more on the folk side here and less on the ambient one.

The whole focus is different actually. Novemthree experiments with various instruments – Scythe to the Grass (reworked) – and creates through this a certain kind of fascination. Compared with the performance of Arrowwood the roles and emphasis appear switched or 'inverted'. The music is rather down to the earth and has some of the sadness also the Finnish band Tenhi has gained some prominence for. Would AW be a fairy humming a tune, NT seems to be more of a druid lost in deep thought.

To sum the impressions up:

This release has entered into my possession several years ago and I have listened to it considerably. How has it aged, then? While the first impression had rather been to the advantage of Arrowwood, this has shifted a bit, while I was revisiting this split album for this review. Novemthree sound a bit more mature and offers more facets to the listener, while the reduced but atmospheric play performed by Chelsea wears off a bit. It is hard to point to other bands for a reference. In case of Arrowwood, imagine a petite and fragile voice with a reduced play of instruments in the background; while Novemthree perform atmospheric ambient folk with an ever-changing set of instruments, which create a calm and sedated atmosphere.

Note:

The release is online at bandcamp and you can listen to it there:

<http://littlesomebodyfamily.bandcamp.com/>

Beithíoch – Dúchas (2011)

(Ireland; Black Metal, Death Metal, Ambient)

10 Tracks (MP3 – Netlabel:) - _ - _ (40:30)

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Beith%C3%AADoch/147056175366451>, <http://beithioch.bandcamp.com/>,

<http://hiarctow.com/>

The history of this release is a bit of speculation. Some time ago the Irish band had a new album announced, only to scrap it again. Is this the old art in a new 'design', then? Or is nothing left of what had been created earlier? Some vague background on this output can be found in the 10th edition of this magazine, which contains an interview with 'Beithíoch'.

It seems like the band is still unsure about how they want to actually sound. Each of the four releases, which have seen the light of day since, differs from what has been crafted before. The debut demo 'Díolaim' is some kind of bedroom black metal with all the all too well-known aspects, while 'Aisling Dhorcha' – the debut release – had a cavernous and intense atmosphere as well as intense arrangements; also the haunting ambient interludes need to be emphasized. 'An Sealgaire', the third output, takes the listener into an entirely different field: a rather raw and reduced kind of art was offered. The music had become more minimalist, which finds also expression in the general absence of vocals. What about 'Dúchas' then?

A clear continuation from where the band has left off with the earlier outputs cannot be found here. It rather a bit of everything and these aspects, used for this new recording, are by no means the best and outstanding ones. For instance, the guitars show some resemblance to 'Aisling Dhorcha', while the atmosphere takes the listener to the 'An Sealgaire' one. Furthermore, there is also a shift in the conceptual broadness: it had been black metal before but the old-school death metal influences cannot be discussed or even spirited away; 'Seilg Fianna Rua'. On the earlier output it had been the part of the ambient interludes to work as a counterpoint to the dominant art, while on this recording the new metal facet tends to take the music in a dew direction. More melodic but less intense, such is the impression while song after song makes a turn. Broader and less limited would be two terms also appropriate for the shift the music has taken since. In fact, someone unfamiliar with the history 'Beithíoch' might mistake the new output for one of a different band.



When you think about it, this issue point to a certain problem: a lack of identity. Well, some might perceive this constant re-interpretation, revamping of the style as refreshing, because some facets remain while other are presented in a new and fresh style. This all might be true, but the art should be able to stand up to this... and it does not. First of all, and this had been true of the previous recordings as well in some respect, the music has a certain level of dullness. On 'Aisling Dhorcha' 'Beithíoch' had been able to compensate this through the vocals, while on 'An Sealgaire' they weren't, simply because this output did not have any. The tension is simply not there, the diversions are actually non-existent and the flow is too steady as it is generally lacking surprising elements. It seems that the reliance on the basic set of instruments for this recording has backfired and left the music in a state of limbo; it switches between certain extremes but is unable to hit solid ground and to leave a certain mark. It might be possible to enjoy certain facets and tracks of this album, but the general impression, that it lacks a direction and complexity, might prohibit to enjoy it thoroughly.

What remains to be said? Well, black metal meets ambient meets death metal is not a too uncommon combination, but this Irish band has some difficulties in finding the proper mixture. Even though the album opens actually quite nice, the longer it takes and more direction the music takes, the more tedious and enduring it all becomes. Vocals or maybe something as simple as samples would have had a very positive aspect on the music. To me 'Dúchas' offers a rather ambiguous kind of art, which, despite a considerable amount of spins over a longer period, am unable to thoroughly enjoy. Some moments are good ... but from a broader perspective, the music in its entirety simply leaves some important to be desired. I would nevertheless encourage you to give this release a try.

Abrahel – Back From the Underworld (2011)

(Spain; Black Metal)

5 Tracks (CD – Self-released) -_- (36:29)

<http://www.facebook.com/abrahelofficial>, <http://www.myspace.com/abrahelmetal>

Even though Abrahel was founded in 1997, their first release has only seen the light of day in 2008. By chance I had been able to receive a promo copy, but my judgement had been a rather harsh one. A core aspect back then, and on certain levels still today, is the overarching reliance on vocals. Imagine the following, nearly every second of every track had been loaded with them. There was no escape, the listener had no time to breathe and the instruments had no room to unfold the potential of their riffs/arrangements. Strangely, the music itself was not even particularly bad. In fact, you might even enjoy it in limits, despite the flaw that tends to drag down everything to a considerable degree.

What about the new one, then?

Well, the band should be 'praised' for moving a bit away from this stalemate situation they have placed themselves in. This latest instalment has a different ratio of instruments/vocals, which adds a bit more room to the former. Nevertheless, the urge to express lyrics on a high scale still persists and the effects are all too common and known. Combined with a rather repetitive music, the combination is as such as to give the impression of arrangements that pass by without leaving much of an impression. Abrahel take the listener back to the early Darkthrone and Mayhem era; black metal without keyboards and a rather 'cold' sound. It seems that the additional clean vocals, along with the influences from other genres, like melodic death metal for instance, are necessary and adequate compromises in order to create some form of an identity. Generally, the music has a certain kind of catchiness, which is nice to listen to, but as it is often unable to shine through – see above – its impact is rather reduced and limited. Long and Dark Funeral (early) inspired passages appear as well and add a certain dynamic and aggressiveness to the art. Somewhat constant is the refusal of the band to create a clearly distinguishable structure and segments. In some respect, the way the music had been composed reminds on the telling of a story to which the instruments create some sort of backing or diversion. Here, the use of samples or something similar had been avoided, but such could be found on the band's debut.

The bottom line:

Let us call it a step in the right direction. While some bands use minimalist lyrics, others like to present to the listener something close to James Joyce's Ulysses. There seem to be fans for both concepts. Yet, it seems like the second approach is much more daring as it is complicated, considering the amount of bands, which would actually use it. Cradle of Filth would be one, but the tempo in singing those as well as the intellectual breadth of the writing itself, is something this Spanish band has difficulties in getting close to.

What the performance of Abrahel still lacks are two thing:

- 1: a counterpoint to the lyrics
- 2: a larger variation of the tempo; in order to create a better atmosphere.

Well, it is better than the debut but still a good deal away from being 'good'.

Cruentus – Asantustha Aatma

(Nepal; Black Metal)

7 Tracks (CD (?)) – Self-released) -_-_- (38:33)

<http://www.soundclick.com/bands/default.cfm?bandID=231558>; <http://ktmrocks.com/site/cruentus/>

According to the source that requested this review and provided me with the download link, this release by the



Nepalese band has actually seen the light of day. How many copies exist and if they can still be acquired lies outside the knowledge of the reviewer. Maybe if the demand is large enough or a Western label interested in it, chances are that it will spread outside the small local domain.

Aside from this, Asantustha Aatma opens in an extremely unsettling way: the weeping of several women; taken from a movie I presume. It leaves you uncomfortable and disturbed, because the way this sample appears and the actual sound is not only a mood killer; it drags down everything into an odd disconcerting realm. By looking at it from a broader perspective, then this sample sounds displaced, because the rest of the album takes no

reference to this one aspect. It is just there but was not woven into a broader context. The listener might be offended, but in a way, that basically leads nowhere.

Leaving this aside, the music of Cruentus, despite being from the Himalaya region, follows the black metal formula of the West. This means, no influences from the local culture and also no instruments from their own cultural sphere were used for this recording. Judging from the titles of the compositions, at least one track comes in their native tongue, while the rest was performed in English. Well, there does not seem to be much of a difference, aside from a momentary confusion due to unintelligible phrases, but such is not too uncommon a thing in the black metal realm.

As mentioned before, 'Cruentus' do not play music with references to their own local sphere. Rather, the setting follows the basic formula. Aside from some rare samples, the band relied on guitars, bass, drums and vocals for their debut. The sound is raw and slightly unbalanced, but compared with some unprofessional attempts that flood the metal scene these days, the overall result is actually quite good. Two types of vocals appear: a slightly shrieking as well as an occasional growling one; duet and solo. Also in terms of the arrangements and concept the band ventured outside the ordinary realm: solo parts, death metal influences – In the Circle of Fear – and at times a variation of tempo that comes as a surprise. Despite the emphasis of fast and also aggressive black metal, the Nepalese band throws in some midtempo as well as slow passages now and then.

It is a bit tricky to point to one band as a source of influence or reference. As each composition comes with a different spirit, the oeuvre of the band appears in a constant reshaping. Darkthrone influences are there, the Swedish band Dawn makes an appearance as well, Dark Funeral should also be mentioned as well as the influences from the melodic death metal genre.

Well, whether or not the release is still sold somewhere is unbeknownst to the reviewer. Maybe their Nepalese label can help out in this respect. A re-release would be quite appropriate though.

Reprints . . .

The following reviews were originally released under the banner of the 'Circle of Destruction' magazine; web and/or print.

Soleil Triste Review

"Zine for unique eerie music" is a pretty strong statement and the goals are certainly set high. Yet, when it comes to the actual content, then I ask myself how this uniqueness is expressed, respectively what this magazine differentiates from other ones; except for professional design, which is pretty much this has to be emphasised. Five conversations, 3 features, a concert report on the Skepticism/Pantheist/Ophis tour, an interview with Maieutiste and a report on a movie by the German black metal band Fäulnis; Suchsland would not approve this one; folks from Germany might understand this reference.



First of all: no reviews of albums, but the interviews have some discussions on the concept of certain albums and musical approaches, so this aspect has some minor coverage. Second: it IS in A5, but the text is arranged vertically and not horizontal, like one would expect. The interviews are pretty interesting to read, but did not come with the amount of depth I expected from a magazine with such a title. Actually, the style of the question orient on what other mags do as well and hardly exceed this level. The impression of pretentiousness surrounds it in some respect.

Well, it looks fine, is good to read, comes in a handy format (close to A5), but I simply cannot make out the eerieness in the concept. So, my from my point of view, this aspect has to be elaborated more and it case this happens, this magazine can become quite unique; maybe even surpase the Polarlicht magazine I once read; a German zine, which does not exist anymore.

Get your copy for 4/5/6 Euro (Germany/Europe/World) incl. postage.

<http://www.myspace.com/soleiltryste>

<http://soleiltryste.org/>

Putrefactive Effect Review

Country France

Size A4

Issues: # 4 (was one year in the making)

Style: xerox; some rare cut and paste segments, very styled design, no consistent approach (1-3 columns)

Language: English (decent, but with flaws)

Address: BEAUTOUR Jimmy - Bec Oiseau 16230 JUILLE - FRANCE cbeautour@aol.com

Grade of professionalism: Somehow really good; interesting interviews, loads of reviews (music, magazines), background sometimes too dark, makes it difficult to read stuff, one article entirely printed in caps(!); NureinTier would say: too large fonts. Reviews of concerts (I see one... but not more)

Writing: Fixed on death metal, a lot of background information, very long and detailed interviews, also the reviews are very informative.

Price: 5€/5\$ postpaid- Trades are welcome.

Additional aspects: Cover of albums in reviews, flyers

Putrefactive Effect #4

Death metal fans should definitely check the Putrefactive Effect magazine out. Loads of reviews, long and detailed interviews can be found here. A4 size and xeroxed copies; in parts using the cut/paste technique, but using a more designed approach, especially when it comes to the reviews. These come with ratings, are focussed on death metal and are not in the 'I praise everything' style written. You get a good idea how the reviewed music sounds, as references are given and the description does not only scratch the surface. When you look at the amount of pages – there are a lot of them, I was too lazy counting them – and the extensive interviews, the it should be obvious that this magazine will keep the reader busy for some time. Actually, this is the aspect that makes this magazine great. The attitude that is transported through the interviews and reviews makes it a pleasure to read and the longer you read it, the more you get a lasting impression of having bought something really great.

Get this excellent magazine from:

BEAUTOUR Jimmy - Bec Oiseau 16230 JUILLE - FRANCE cbeautour@aol.com

Price: 5€/5\$ postpaid- Trades are possible.

Deep Vein – Symbols for the Dead

So, how do you review an album from a band of which one of the members runs a death metal zine? A really good death metal zine... I have to admit. A zine in which this person expresses his sentiments towards releases of other bands quite clearly. So, it is obvious that a lot can be expected from such a project. The bloody problem is that these frog's leg eaters, Deep Vein are French, are actually able to fulfil them. Damn! Symbols for the Dead is a fucked up example of sick and insane death metal. Hell, this genre is really celebrated here. Heavy, brutal and well crafted shit that is so disgustingly well played that one cannot praise this stuff enough; remember, I am German. Imagine old-school death metal of a sinister kind but with a modern and professional sound. Slow and fast passages, weird leads and solos by the guitars, countless breaks ... ah fuck it ... worst of it all, the entire album gives the impression the band recorded the stuff while doing something different; the stuff only French do. It all sounds all too easy.

Please keep in mind: this piece comes right from the death metal hell and needs some time until it really makes 'click'. Deep Vein are no 'we follow the ordinary routine band'. Time and energy seems to have been spent on this album and you fucking hear it. Now get it folks!

Thrash Attack #7

Thrash Attack is a magazine from the southern part of Germany aka one of the most miserable places on earth; my disgust is beyond words. It comes in the DIY style, cut and paste, xeroxed copied and generally focusses on one-column texts. The front-cover is hand-drawn and comes with boobies, while for the interviews have pictures in the background were used; hardly flyers. I really appreciate the index and the well organized way of the contents; it is German mag, so everything is put in a very precise manner... we are over-correct around here.

The focus is, for those who have not read or understood the title of the review, about thrash metal and not much outside of this genre is covered. A bit black, death, heavy, grind ... but the main focus lies elsewhere. Long and extensive interviews, well written and interesting; it is also nice to see not only young but also 'old'/ established bands covered. Of the reviews the same can be said and they come with a nice underground attitude and ripping on famous bands; there is piece on a Kreator and a Sepultura album.

So, it is well executed piece of an ug metal zine and even though I despise the place where it was created, a recommendation can easily be given.

3€ Germany

5€ Europe

6€/9\$ Worldwide (i know fucking expensive, but it only covers the postage, I still lose money)

Get it here:

Flo_Grill@web.de

www.myspace.com/germanthrashmaniac

Taid – III

Quod latet, ignotum est, ignoti nullo cupido.

Taid are from Sweden and the title might already suggest some aspect of this demo. Yes indeed, it would be their third one since the band was founded back in 2005.

Sweden and Gothic Metal? Does there ring a bell? No? Even not after having listened to some of Taid's tracks? Never heard of Sundown? Ah, alright, some might stop reading here, especially those familiar with the band's page at the Metal Archives. Well, their music is not cloned or so; here is old wine in new skins. In comparison with the more famous band the music of Taid is more metal oriented, has more riffs and less of that depressive basis respectively concept. Yet, the riffs wake these memories ... and I do not have a problem with this as III is an interesting piece of music.

What makes the music enjoyable is the emphasis of the guitars over the keyboards. The latter play only a minor part and appear only in the background and there not even as a constant texture but rather as motives which help to create an atmosphere. Luckily the guitars have enough drive to give the music some momentum and to keep it going. Everything is somehow dynamic and catchy; In Flames comes to my mind for some inexplicable reason. Inoffensive and very good to listen to, slower and faster parts, variable song-writing and a production which provided the instruments with enough power, all this makes III a demo worth to listened to more than once. The music of this genre has certainly not been re-evolved on this piece of art, yet the actual performance is already quite good. An argument in favor of the band is also the absense of female as well as some 'whiny' (aka the world is so mean and my fingernail has just been torn) vocals. Daniels voice give the music some atmosphere and character.

This is a well crafted release, which I thoroughly enjoy and fans of keyboard-less gothic metal should give this band a try.

An update on Stan of Reality Impaired Records

Hello everyone! It's been nearly 5 months since the Joplin tornado, and we are now living in Utah in our friend Erik Disorder's old place. Salt Lake City is really nice so far, and things are going ok for us now. I am working to get Reality Impaired off the ground again, I need a decent stereo, and a cd duplicator. Right now here is a small list of items that I have available. I implore you, please buy something to help the cause and get this quality underground music label up and running! Any help is appreciated! I am not able to do much trading at this time, as my collection and some of the label merchandise is still in MO, or still on its way here. I need to get some cash flow going to have things with the label running like they should be. Soon I plan to have a paypal account set-up, for now just send me cash or a check or money order. That would be swell. And you can feel good about helping out. Think of the joy and elation you will feel. Some new releases planned, including FUNNEL VISION, which is a weird blues/noise/experimental album that we recorded on the road, an Michigan, Ohio, Kentucky, Missouri, and Utah. It will be a 2-cd, 1 tape set with a booklet and sticker. It will tell the tale of 2 shell-shocked underground warriors whose house was destroyed and who decided to go on the road to see friends and family, and to heal mentally. THANX to all our friends and family who have helped us out along the way! The old PO Box 1285 is still good and will be for a long time, though the mail getting to me from there will of course be delayed. The home address is printed here for now, soon I will get a PO Box here in Utah. KROM lost all their merchandise in the tornado, so donations are needed to get their cd pressed again. Thanx goes out to everyone!

ENCRUSTED "From Ashes Rise" cd \$5 Crust-punk from 1995. Includes the demo, which was the label's 1st release, and live stuff.

SJG/SONIC DISORDER collab. 7" \$4 Strange noise from this collaborative project. Bright blue/smeared vinyl
FREAK FLAG "Criterion" cd \$5 Mind-blowing experimental outfit, will not disappoint!

POOPY NECROPONDE "Burlap" cd \$4 Excellent rocking depressive feel. Poopy solo and angry. Very cool.
 CAULIFLOWER ASS & BOB "Wretchedist Hits" cd \$4 Hillarious drunk-hillbilly anthems. Superb!
 VAGINAL DISCHARGE "Froth" cd \$5 Acoustic comedy with a sick sense of humor
 POOPY'S BIRTHDAY SHOW dvd \$5(!!!!) with performances by: BREATHILIZOR, BOY IN LOVE, and more
 HEP Z cds "Centavos" and "Dayplanner of a Madman" \$4 each or 2 for \$6 Good song structures, quality heavy music.
 BOY IN LOVE cd \$3 Enough foolishness to shake a stick at.
 THE EARWIGS "Noise Beast" cd \$4 (last copies!) Alienoisedestructionmusick. Not for the weak of heart.
 THE EARWIGS one-sided 7" \$3 (early rehearsal) Buy "Noise Beast" and get the 7" for \$1!
 MIKE LOVE 666 cd \$3 (last copies!!!) Interesting noise from England. Satisfying.
 MIDNIGHT "Complete and Total Fucking Midnight" cd \$5 (only 2 copies) Black death thrash from this Ohio project.
 MINCH "Complete 7" Collection" cd \$4 ALL their 7"s!!! Essential for underground maniacs! 2 copies.
 THE OUTWARD GATE comp. tape (pro-done) \$3 Re-release of a comp. from '97. Death-themed noise
 TRAVIS several cds: "Skullbuggery", "Muff Diver", "CCBJ", "Ballads for Bastards", "Blunt Trauma" Crazy bizarre sounds like Tom Waits on some bad acid. \$3 each or all 5 for \$10
 SOCKEYE "Retards Hiss Past My Window" cd \$5 Classic from retard-core Ohio legends(?)
 SOCKEYE "Obscure..." pro-cd in a 7" sleeve \$4 (All their songs not released on cd until this.)
 SOCKEYE "Beffing Ting Ting" 7" \$4 vinyl release of this old demo.
 DESOLATE HORIZON pro-tape \$3 (last copies!) droning noise, very good listener response.
 "12-Way Noise Split" tape & "12 Pairs of Hands" solo noise comp (both on Sludgesicle Recs.) \$3 each or both for \$5
 BREATHILIZOR/KOLOB TRUST FUND split 7" \$4 great release from these goons!
 SONS OF SKIP SKIFFINGTON stack of cdrs \$3 Get them now while you can. Unique and rare.
 VAGINAL DISORDER/GENITAL MASTICATOR split 7" \$2 please buy one!!
 MALIGNANT INCEPTION cd \$5 raw brutal death from Utah, '90's release of this old band.

For postage, add \$1 to total for USA, and \$2 elsewhere. Checks made out to ME, not Reality Impaired.

Reality Impaired
 Stan Boman
 1869 S. 1300 E.
 Salt Lake City, UT
 84105
 usa

Sources:

<http://www.archive.org/details/lartetlesartiste00dayouoft>
<http://www.archive.org/details/adventureinphoto00thaniala>
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Outlook

A chance to see the stuff completed that was originally planned for this edition

The interviews which were supposed to appear already

Some music I am eagerly waiting to write on

Poetry again.

as well as the all too common picture of old and out of copyright magazines.

